

# DOWN THE LINE

ISSUE 017 | FEBRUARY 2015



## STRANGER KINGS

"it took us 20 years  
and 20 bands to find  
our voice"

DENI GAUTHIER

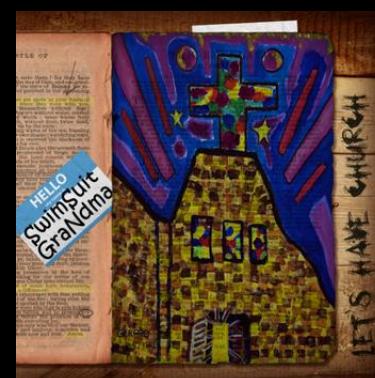
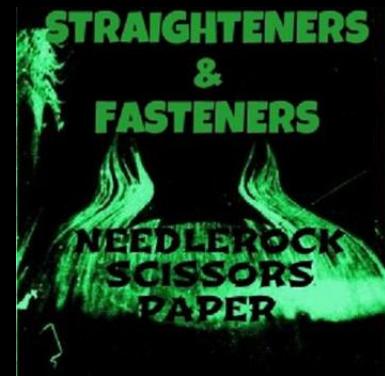
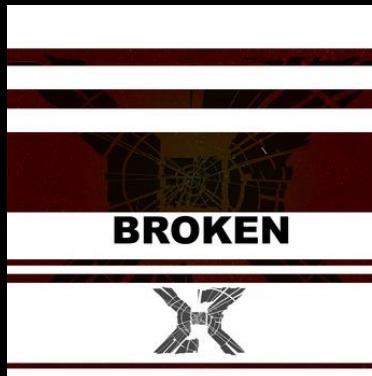
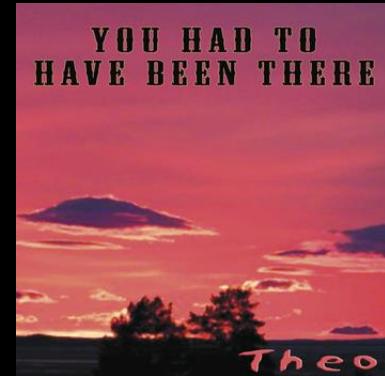
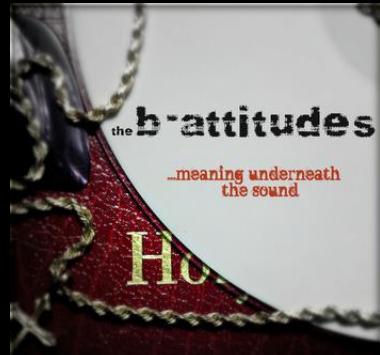
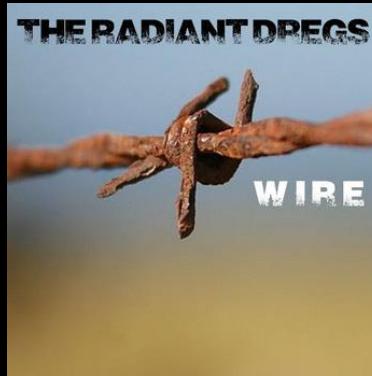
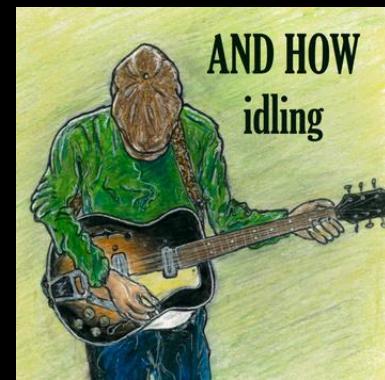
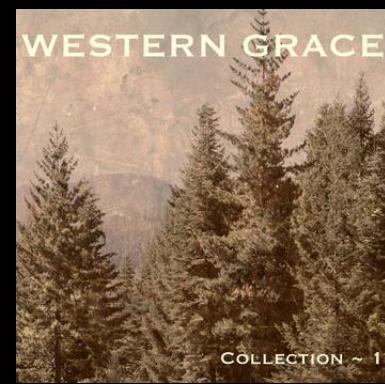
THE ALTAR BILLIES

DAN ZIMMERMAN

GORDON DRIVER

BRIAN GODAWA

**DOWNTHELINECOLLECTIVE.BANDCAMP.COM**



# NEVER ENDING ROCK



# NEWS

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**Bill Mallonee Accepting Pre-orders for New Album *Land & Peoples***

**Velvet Blue Music Makes Old School Releases Available Digitally**

**CPR signs with Raven Faith Records**

***Split Decision* Released by Boston's A Common Goal and Idaho's False Idle**

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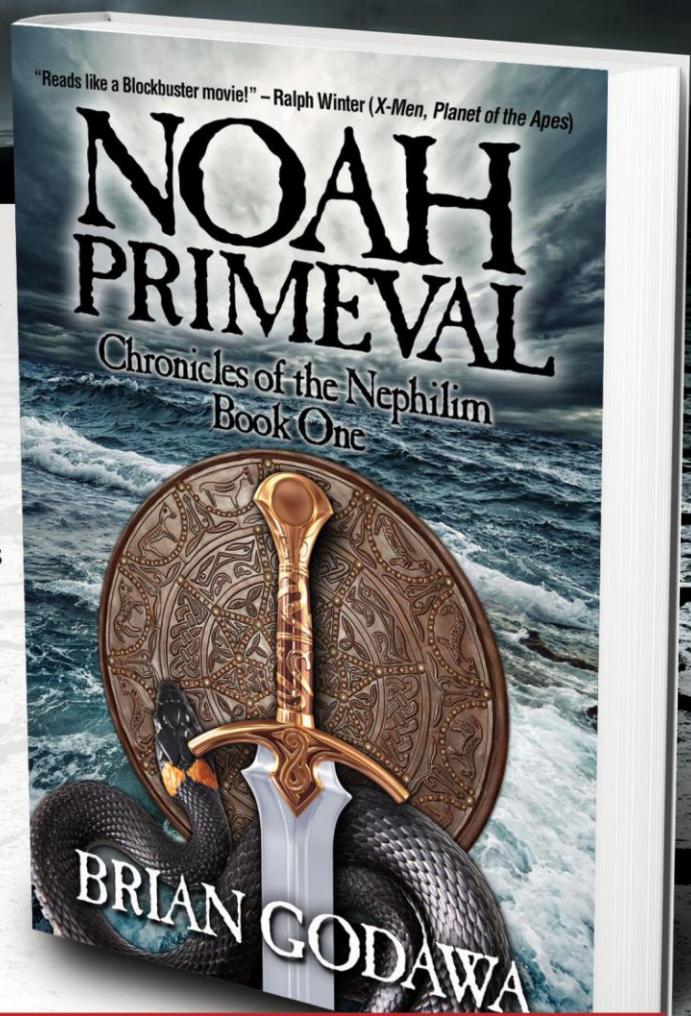
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# STRANGER KINGS



We reviewed this album a good while back. I'm consistently apologizing for being late with everything. This happens to have happened at the worst time because this album is out and probably on your record player as we speak. My severe delay on getting this interview finished has nothing to do with how absolutely brilliant this release is! I have listened to this album end to end, over and over, for days at a time, and I appreciate it more and more each time I listen.

There is a "pocket" of creativity that exists when I think about Subdivision Records and the musicians involved within that community. There are so many notable bands affiliated with the label, and in many respects I think they come out with the most honest and "new" sounding music around. Stranger Kings carries this creativity forward with a record that is compelling and moving musically and lyrically, but even more than that it is emotionally charged as if the music and the lyrics hang on each other and create a truly unique experience for the listener.

I had the opportunity to catch up with Herb Grimaud (bass) and Eric Campuzano (guitar), and then got in a few questions with Holly Nelson Anderson who sings vocals in the band. For fans of The Lassie Foundation, or Herb Grimaud's The Sound Gallery, there is plenty of great stuff in here. We also got the goods on Holly's upcoming release... so, thanks for your patience, and follow the links at the bottom to purchase and check out all things Stranger Kings.



## 7 STRANGER KINGS

**Steve Ruff:** I'm assuming Jesse and Sam played drums on certain tracks, can you tell me what role R, Dylan and John played?

**Herb:** Jesse Nason played drums "Lay Low", "All of Everything", & "Katherine." Sam West played drums on "Lacuna." Steve R engineered a few songs, did some analog modular stuff on "Lacuna" & "We Are," & was the hero for "Imagination," the Xymox cover we did. We've been very fortunate to have some friends offer up their time to this record. Dylan has been an inspiration on a few tracks. Playing drums while Eric & I work out song ideas. John was working with Eric before I came along. He was a great asset to rhythms, keys, & melody ideas. He's also great at making his own beer.

We also had a lot of help from Jeremy Wood, Andy Prickett, & Jared Rich. Brady Esquivel has been a permanent member for a couple years now.

**Campuzano:** I echo what Herb has said. Stranger Kings has been blessed by our good friends; whether it be a drum track or a random acoustic guitar part. We've been very lucky to have our friends play on our record. In regards to Steve R., while wearing our tin foil hats, he never gave up hope and more importantly never gave us hope. We carry our own cross. He was our Steve Albini in this process. We sink or swim on our own merits.

Dylan... the Boy King. John Hertzberg and I go back a long time. He made my band's first demo back in '85. Since then, he has always been a part of my life and my music. I remember sitting in his garage and he played the new "Ministry" record... Still don't get it, but he was one of the first person's that exposed to new music that wasn't U2 or The Alarm. We used to exchange mix tapes and he was the one that turned me on to Xymox. Lastly, while working construction, my ghetto blaster does not play cd's, so I was only left with talk radio or cassettes. I found an old mix tape that John made for me. And there it was, Xymox's "Imagination." Perfect for Stranger Kings. Hertzberg, amongst others, have been a huge influence and contributor to Stranger Kings.

To say the least, we have had a lot help from our friends on this record. They have been the biggest influence.

**How did the band come together, and what is the process of songwriting that happens?**

**Herb:** SK came out of The Lassie Foundation. The guys in TLF were moving to other things & Eric gave me a call to come down & help out with some demo material he was working on. It just seemed like Eric & I were on the same page for doing something new & it just fell in line.

Our process always starts with Eric or myself playing some kind of melody that happens in the moment. Other than "Law Low" I

don't believe there's been a song someone has come into practice saying "hey I've got an idea." It's all started in the moment.

**Campuzano:** As Herb mentioned, Stranger Kings was born out of The Lassie Foundation. Wayne left for New York and Jeff left for the Smashing Pumpkins. I had some songs and still wanted to play guitar so I needed a bass player. It's funny, I can tell you the first time I met Herb, at Joy Bells, but I cannot recall how or when we became friends. He's a hard ass. He's only made me better.

After a few weeks, we agreed, there was something here and wanted to explore it. The only caveat from Herb was "No shitty music. If I don't like it, I won't play it." I loved it. There will be no conceding to band politic or emotion; just best we can do. We asked Holly if she was interested on singing on our jams... She said yes... and you got Stranger Kings. It took us 20 years and 20 bands to find our voice.

**Are all you guys in the same general area? Didn't R move away, or am I imagining that for some weird reason?**

**Herb:** Yes. No one's more than 20 minutes away from the studio. He (R) did move east a couple years ago. His input & conversations are missed.

**I know both you guys have a pretty eclectic taste in music...Herb has turned me on to more bands than anyone I can think of, and I generally associate elements of his projects with the same music that he has turned me onto. There is a huge mix of ambient/shoegaze/post punk and goth music in his music library, and I find all 4 of those elements in Stranger Kings in varying degrees. There is a definite 80's vibe as well as a very current energy that I can't compare really to anything else. How do you guys sum up the style that you've created as Stranger Kings, and who/what would you say some influences on the music are?**

There's no doubt we're influenced by the music of our youth & John Hughes movies. We all have a lot of common ground when it comes to taste in music. I think what takes the lead in SK is melody & textures.

**I have read via various social sites that the songs "Steppe" and "Safe Word" are in the works?**

"Safe Word" & Steppe" are just working titles for future releases. There's talk about maybe doing a 7" split with another band or maybe another SK full length. We'll see when we get there. We're still happy writing together so hopefully it will keep going for a while.

There will be a total of 9 remixes available for the digital release. There's remixes from Jeremy Wood, Steve R, Jeff Schroeder, Ojo Taylor, Robert Gutschow, Greg Hobgood, & a few others.

There will be a total of 9 remixes available for the digital release. There's remixes from Jeremy Wood, Steve R, Jeff Schroeder, Ojo Taylor, Robert Gutschow, Greg Hobgood, & a few others. Everything from [strangerkings.bandcamp.com](http://strangerkings.bandcamp.com) & the EP offered at the live shows will all be released with the full length.

**In regards to the lyrics, where do you draw the most inspiration from?**

**Holly:** I'm not sure there's a "most." Anything that makes me wonder, I guess. If there is a "most," it's probably love. That seems to be a loaded and inexhaustible topic. It would not surprise me if a few other songwriters are inspired by love, too... that and the question of how many vegetarians secretly eat bacon.

**The lyrics seem very poetic in a sense. Do you also write outside of music?**

Sometimes I'll write.  
Sometimes I won't.  
Sometimes it rhymes.  
Sometimes it don't.

**One of the things that strikes me the most in regards to the lyrics and the music is that the structure is so intertwined, almost as if the lyrics are written to form around and inside the music... what is the process for you in writing, do you hear the music and then craft the lyrics, or how does that work for you exactly?**

With regard to writing in general, it happens both ways. Sometimes the music comes first and sometimes the lyrics/melody. I think almost exclusively with Stranger Kings the music comes first. The guys usually bang out a brilliant track then I come along and do my best to ruin it.

**What other artists do you cite as an influence?**

Growing up my house was constantly humming with musical greatness: the Beatles, the Beach Boys, Jackson Browne, Fleetwood Mac, Simon and Garfunkel, Joni Mitchell, ELO, Bob Dylan, Rolling Stones, Gordon Lightfoot, CSNY. So many more. I got a stellar musical education early on. Cocteau Twins. Psychedelic Furs. Beck. I'm sure I'm leaving out a few (hundred).

**The Stranger Kings bio cites John Hughes films as an influence. What's your favorite Hughes film and why?**

At the moment I'll say it's a tie between *Pretty in Pink* and *Some Kind of Wonderful*. Ask me later and you might get a different answer. John Hughes was brilliant.

**What other bands and artists have you lent your vocal talents to?**

I started out singing backup for the Killing Tree. During that time The Prayer Chain asked me put some vocals on the track "Worm" from their album *Shawl*. I also got to sing on a couple of Mortal tunes, "Speed of Sound" and "Nightfall and Splendor." I did some live stuff with the Violet Burning, and I've put backup vocals on various Northern releases over the years. I guess I'm vocally promiscuous.

**Can you give us any details about your upcoming project or projects?**

The first Stranger Kings record is officially available NOW! We're excited to finally put it out. The vinyl is beautiful. We're planning a record release show in Chinatown mid-October (ed.note: I really am this late) with our friends HOTT MT. Should be fun.

Besides Stranger Kings I write and record my own material for Northern Records. We're just about done with the second record. I've had the privilege of working with a very talented group of musicians on it. The sound is pretty organic and I think pretty heavily influenced by the classics I grew up with.

I've also been extremely lucky enough to sing a few tracks on the CUSH records. I'm always floored by the vision and execution of the CUSH projects. The latest record just came out, titled *SP3*. It's amazing, sonically and visually. The vinyl/download is available at the Northern Records store at [www.northernrecords.com](http://www.northernrecords.com).

Also Jason Martin (Starflyer 59) and I just finished up a project (!!). Jason is incredibly talented. I grew a lot as a songwriter in the process. That record should be making an appearance on the Northern Records site soon as well.

[www.strangerkings.com](http://www.strangerkings.com)  
[www.subdivisiontheory.com](http://www.subdivisiontheory.com)  
[strangerkings.bandcamp.com/album/stranger-kings](http://strangerkings.bandcamp.com/album/stranger-kings)







# deni gauthier



So this interview has been “in the can” for at least 10 months... it was actually the first one completed for this issue. My apologies to Deni for the extreme delay, but the information in this interview is relevant and interesting still, and his album definitely will make by top 20 of 2014. So read on to see why so many people are loving Deni’s unique brand of acoustic rock music....

**Matt: For those not familiar, what is your background in the “music scene” (if that was such a thing still when you started)?**

Deni: My background started back in the 90's as a Primus, Radiohead loving bass player in my own band called inroad. I learned to play bass in my church's youth group and high school jazz bands, like so many other musicians. I went pro when I started a duo called theBetween with one of my best friends Rob Carter. We ended up playing a lot of shows and when we parted ways musically after so many years, I just kind of started floating around. Eventually I knew it was time to go “solo” as they say, and just started using my own name and refining my solo sound.

**You have a new album coming out (*Quiet Town*). What can people expect from this album (both existing fans and those that have never heard your work before?)**

Well, it's different than anything I've done. *Quiet Town* was a purposeful exit from my comfort zone in my own studio into a new land of ravens, pine trees, a quiet road and a school house that had a bit of a life of its own. There is more grit, more life, and more honestly in these songs. They aren't really the same crafty acoustic pop songs like my previous solo work... there's much more depth.

When I say there is life in the album, I mean you can hear my dog's collar shake. You can hear us talking in the background, and a few endings are impromptu and a tad unconventional. You'll hear Tom (bass player for the album) snoring and us laughing when we tried to get more of his snoring in the vocal mic and his headphones feedback and wake him up. We left it in there because the last thing I wanted to record was a polished studio album. Dre (my producer) and I wanted life in it. Something to dig in to.



**It seems like the writing and recording process for *Quiet Town* were different for you in some ways than in the past?**

Certainly was... I started writing for this album about six months before I was scheduled to spend the month of November in the school house with Dre for tracking. A normal process would be for me to lock the door in my studio and emerge six weeks later with an album, but this was different. I spent 6 months making my songs the best I could make them, writing new ones and refining. I recorded demos for Dre, and we headed to the studio to track for a month.

Dre and I brought other musicians into this project. “More DNA is better”. As in, the more great people you have involved the better the album can be right? We tracked for a month, brought a few people in to the studio, but they came and went, it was mainly Dre and I in the school house working on things. I'm used to being a lone wolf on these sort of projects.

**You and I have discussed your feelings over the final product of *Quiet Town*. I think those thoughts shine an interesting light on the overall project. So even though it is a cliché question, what are your feelings about *Quiet Town*?**

If you are used to my other albums, you may find yourself all of a sudden thinking about this album. You may have just loved it if you were a fan of my previous work and heard something like the last one I did... but this one I'm hearing a lot of people talking about it. “It's sure different” or “there's a lot going on in there isn't there?”... It's meatier. It's harder to get. There are noises you may not like but they grow on you.



My feelings? It's the best work I've ever done. Was it supposed to be an easy listen? Nope. I'm not here to make you comfortable. I'm here to make you have feelings of some sort. But I promise you if you let it get in your head it may become the fabric of your life for a short while. It may be that album you play years from now and remember what your life was like back then. I hope it will become one of your favourites of all time. Tall order eh?

That said, I also think this is the kind of album you can put on repeat while you are BBQing in the back yard and not care to change the album for a few rotations.

Plug in your headphones and get deeper though.

**So why vinyl? A small run of 100 must have been expensive?**

I ran more than 100. So the cost per unit isn't bad, but the overall price is high! I'm independent but I have lots of help from people that believe in me. I had help with the bulk of the cost for this though.

**Your music videos seem to be very labor intensive. Why go the stop motion art route instead of, say, lyric video or live performance capture approach?**

I'm an artist. I have no trouble committing to labour intensive work if the result will be beautiful. Plus... I really want what I do to be lasting you know? What's a few days or weeks of work if it can make someone feel happy... or anything for that matter.

**You also produce various forms of visual art. Do you do that professionally or as a hobby? I believe that I have read that some are for sale?**

I've been a painter for my whole life. My favourite teacher of all time was Mr Thirtle. My grade 7 and 8 art teacher. He invested in me and my ability to draw. I only started playing music much later high school. In fact, I was accepted to a big art college in Toronto but didn't end up going... I started selling art pretty early on, but I used to have piles of paintings in my house until I had a lean month in the early days of my musical career and made an attempt to sell them. I sold most of my art inside a month and paid all my bills! Since then when I feel arty, I'll paint, and I'll throw it up for sale. It usually goes pretty quick.

I've thought about spending a month and painting and showing at art galleries, and I do a few commissioned pieces a year. I'll say that I have a kids book with art on the go right now though.

**How did the "wild things in starving artists wall paintings" thing come about? I think someone else does that with Star Wars and Thomas Kincaid paintings?**

I just saw all these old landscapes in my travels and thought why not re-purpose these bad boys? Funny eh?

**Back to your music, it seems that there is a hopeful message thread throughout your lyrics. Even though there are definitely darker ones, too. Some people spend a lot of time crafting a certain message, while others just let whatever is inside loose. What is your approach to your lyrics?**

I was talking to a friend the other day and he asked me the same thing. I've somehow crafted a feeling that the art and songs I make are very purposeful, the reality is that they just pop out. I try to form them, so to speak, into something understandable, but I have no specific message in mind other than everyone is unique and should be loved unconditionally.

That said, I work on lyrics now as much or more than the musical side of the song. It never used to be that way.

**You have a good amount of music on your Bandcamp site. Is that all of your output? Take us through some of the highs and lows of your past output.**

Well, I went solo a few years back and just hammered out "Man About Town". They were mostly songs I had written for my old duo. Right away I stared on "i (am) hope" so I could have more than an EP to sell at shows. Then there was this and that, a few covers, and a few Christmas tunes. I had a plan though, pretty much all of that was to lead up to *Quiet Town*.

**Sorry for all of the cliché questions, but since you are a fan of many of the artists we cover (and others), could you tell us some about your current and past influences (musical and artistic)?**

A HUGE influence for me is Michael Knott. As a teen his music seemed to hit me the hardest. I mean, I have all of his hundreds of albums and like most of it. I'm a fan. The 77's I liked in the 90's but didn't love. Now their earlier albums are some of my favourite ever recorded. They nailed it back then and no one knew it. Seriously, "All Fall Down" is AMAZING and I'm a bigger fan now than ever. The Choir I always loved. Radiohead was huge for me. OK Computer is my favourite album of all time. Neil Finn's solo work I love... but my favourite music is made by Sigur Ros. I cannot get enough. I'm sure future release of my music will have very strong leanings towards heavier ambient guitars like theirs.

**We also like to have artists share tips for producing music/art in this "difficultly disconnected but still connected" landscape we are in (since major record labels are no longer even a pipe dream). What is your advice for people that want to go into music now?**

Make the best music you can. Make the best art you can and challenge yourself to do it better, more provoking, different, more beautiful. It may even become a job someday.



# THE ALTAR BILLIES

The Altar Billies are one of the most solid and entertaining bands out there in the rockabilly genre. As diverse as the scene is and as different as many of the acts sound, Mike Stand has found his niche along with Johnny X on upright bass and Chuck Cummings on drums. They just released their second album, but it is the first full length from the group. The interesting thing about this style of music is how diverse each song can be musically, but with all the varied influences in place, the sound is best defined by the term "punktry" which I read on their Facebook page.

When you consider all the bands Mike Stand has been a part of, you realize each different element and sound has existed in some capacity in his other work. You can hear the progression of his playing from Altar Boys and his solo work, on down to Clash of Symbols and now Altar Billies. The new album *Head'n Out West* is exceptionally solid. Johnny X attacks the standup in a precise manner, the bass pounds out the rhythm and really sets the pace. Stand's guitar work shimmers all over each song, the pluckin', strummin' and jangly punch of fast paced good ol' rock n roll. Rounding out the band is Chuck Cummings on drums (can't believe we've never interviewed him before). Chuck Cummings has played in so many notable bands that it would be difficult to remember them all. I first remember seeing him in Uthanda, but he has left a mark on just about every other band you can think of including the original line-up of Aunt Bettys. The drumming on here is the heart of this band, and it's great to see Chuck Cummings in a rockabilly outfit, it fits really well.

Okay, so below is an interview I did with Michael W. Stand. It was fun to do because I love how Mike elaborates on his musical influences and it is a definite trip through rock n roll history!

**Steve: First question is that I am really curious about music that inspires you in the Rockabilly genre?**

Mike Stand: Good question.

First of all, the genre is pretty broad and the lines often blur between rockabilly, country, rock, bluegrass and gospel. People often ask me: "What is rockabilly?" I tell them it is rock, bluegrass and country mixed together with a dash of hiccups! This answer either leaves them with a puzzled look, or a smile on their face.

With that said, I am enamored with the pioneers of rockabilly that really had no template or guidelines when they started this genre. They just fused together all their different influences and more-or-less made it up as they went along. Also note, that many of the early rockabilly tunes were older rhythm and blues songs just given a whole different treatment: for example "That's Alright Mama" by Elvis (often referred to as the first official rockabilly song ever recorded in 1954) was written by Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup.

With that background in mind my inspiration varies, but I'm looking to guys like Eddie Cochran, Gene Vincent, Johnny Cash, pre-army Elvis, Buddy Holly, Johnny Burnette and the Collins kids. Guitarists: Scotty Moore, Joe Mathis, and Grady Martin. There were a ton of other acts that kind of slid under the radar including: Conway Twitty, Charlie Feathers, some even include much of what Creedence Clearwater did as rockabilly. And there are today's artists: Reverend Horton Heat, Brian Setzer, Junior Brown, The Knitters, Moonlight Howlers, Buzz Campbell (who is a really great player and nice guy by the way), and Lee Rocker to start.

I'm also a huge fan of the Dirt Daubers (the kinder gentler side of the Legendary Shack Shakers). Mark Robertson who played bass with Altar Boys for a number of years plays upright in both groups. Recently I discovered a great new rockabilly artist out of Australia named Pat Cappacci.

There is also a great online rockabilly radio channel that I listen to a lot called "Rock'n Therapy Radio" (RockabillyWorldWide.com). It is quite eclectic and boy do they play some crazy, great, weird, and off-the-wall- rockabilly – I love this station! It features both old and new rockabilly bands and artists. And not the usual guys, but a lot of underground acts

You know most of modern day Rockabilly really is on the musical fringe (except for maybe Brian Setzer), it will always have a cult following, but I doubt will ever be hugely popular. That's ok because it keeps it on the cutting edge and less trendy.

**This is the first "proper" release for you guys (in a sense), what was the recording process like for the band?**

In late November 2013 we went into NRG studio in LA with the idea of recording 14 basic drum and upright tracks. Mike Eckes, a good friend from church, works at NRG so he was able to block out a whole day and evening for us. My son Keith went along to help and to learn how the recording process works in a professional studio. In 12 hours time we finished all 14 basic tracks. Both Chuck and Johnny's playing was tight and nearly flawless. I laid down scratch vocal guitar and guitar tracks - which were less than stellar, but again – they were scratch tracks.

So once we had the basics finished, it was my turn, and this was when it really got fun! Over the years I have "massed" a few good mics, pres, and the like, so I have some decent gear – not great – but good enough. My church was gracious enough to give me a room to setup and work in, so I started chipping a way at guitar overdubs. I worked my sessions around my job, family, and everything else that was going on. On many a Friday night, I would leave to work on the project at 9 pm, work until 2 am, go back home catch a few hours sleep, then be back down to the studio by 7 am and work until noon or so – sometimes longer. I rarely did recording on a work night – I really need to be on my game at my day "gig" as a music teacher. Yet, because I am a music teacher, I get a sizeable break over Christmas and Easter. So I just kept this disciplined schedule and was able to get my kids where they needed to be while simultaneously working on this project.

I kept a detailed log of every session I did, jotting down settings, what I worked on etc. Everything I did for guitar and vocal overdubs is outlined in this little book, it is very messy mind you, but it does articulate the process I went through to record and edit this project. I finished most of the guitars on March 1. Then I started chipping away at the vocals. Some of the vocals I did at church, and a number of them I did at home on our "Blue Dragon Fly" mic. As I am looking at the book right now, it appears we finished tracking on May 12. I made stems of all the tracks and handed the over to Keith Rogers at Project K studios - who did a superb job mixing the project. He went above and beyond the call of duty! We recorded 14 songs and chose 12 of the 14 to finish.

It was decided that both "I'm Still Stand'n" and "Ballad of the Big Boy" would fit nicely on this project and since they were already

finished products, it was a slam-dunk. "The Ballad of the Boy" reprise was mostly my doing and is basically an added 4th verse with a historical narrative about this incredible locomotive that I pulled off youtube (public domain). All told I spent somewhere between 300 and 400 hours on *Head'n Out West*. It was a lot of work and doable as long as I stuck to a strict schedule. The last month before we released it got kind of crazy, I spent a few long nights finishing up the mixes and working on the mastering with Rich Renken. With my son's graduation from High School and all the activities going on in the family at the end of the school year, it got kind of, well, a little sticky at home (we'll just leave it at that), but somehow we managed to "get 'er done."

**This band is a really solid project, it seems like this music is a fitting place to land for your artistic journey. I feel like there are influences and elements of the rockabilly sound in Altar Boys and your solo projects, and *Head'n Out West* seems like the culmination of that. Agree or disagree?**

I totally agree with you. And what you are describing is what Johnny X brought to light so many years ago when we started hanging out together and playing music. This whole idea of undiscovered rockabilly influences in some of my songs was the genesis of this group. Johnny went through a number of my songs on *Full Circle*, and a few other songs and pointed out the rockabilly influences and "leanings." The very first demo he gave me was a rockabilly version of "Against the Grain." It was all there, I just needed someone to help me connect the dots, and Johnny was that guy.

It's funny though, because before I bought the infamous "GLM Tele" in Altar Boys I had an old Gretsch in my hands that I was ready to plunk down a whopping 250.00 dollars for. But a "friend" of mine wanted to just "play it" for a few days. Oh yeah he played it for a few days and then bought it out from underneath me. With that said, it could have easily gone the other way, but history shows that the path I traveled down is the way it all supposed to be – destiny you might say. But things could have just as easily turned out differently. But better late than never, as what I am doing musically now really fits. A good example of being drawn to a new style of music can be seen when George Harrison discovered Indian Music, of course him going all "Indian" was at the expense of his "rockabilly" roots. So I am not sure whether that was a good trade off or not? HA! I do say that tongue in cheek as eventually he came back around in his later years and had numerous jams with the likes of Carl Perkins and other rockabilly artists. In my case, it has given me a new lease on making music, which I thought would never happen again.

**What would you say has been one of your "go to" albums as a favorite from your entire output?**

As of late, probably both *Full Circle* and the second Clash of Symbols record, *Begging at the Temple Gate Called Beautiful*. Bobby Harty was great to work with on *Full Circle*. He really "made" that record, and is a fantastic engineer, guitarist and producer. Bobby has found his niche writing music for a number of TV shows. But to be honest I really don't like listening a lot to "my" music – it is just hard for me to be objective and enjoy it - I think most artists are like that.

**For your history of music from The Altar Boys to the solo albums and then Clash of Symbols, I think this might well be my**

**favorite... this music is so well rounded and puts the kick in with the standup bass and Chuck Cummings drum wizardry. How did you guys end up coming together, the band has really got a diverse output with various projects in the past, but the varied talent really becomes something special on this record. How did you connect with Chuck and Johnny and how long did it take you guys to get the album together?**

Well, we are glad you like the new project! Your favorite! Wow considering how long I've been doing this, I will take that as a huge compliment! Thank you!

First, the history behind Johnny and I meeting is quite interesting and worth noting. I remember seeing this guy walking through the church parking lot one day wearing a "Ramones" t-shirt. And I thought to myself "There is someone I should get to know." It was of course Johnny, and much to my surprise his wife and my wife were already friends. To top it off he had a son that was entering kinder at the same school we planned to send my son. So it was only a matter of time before our paths crossed, and became friends. Him and I connected rather quickly.

Sometime in 2006 I invited him to play guitar with me at a Wednesday night Bible study. We got to know each other on a musical level and I found out quickly that he was very talented. He just had a good musical sense about him. One evening he showed me that demo of the first rockabilly version of "Against the Grain" that I told you about earlier. We started talking rockabilly and he made me a CD with a number of rockabilly groups on it and as I was listening to it I thought: "wow, where have I been? This is great!!"

One day we had a conversation about putting something together with him on upright bass, and me on guitar (of course), but I was still in the middle of my masters program and didn't have a lot of time on my hands to start a new project. But as soon as I finished that degree, along with a second teaching credential I dove right in. At first, the idea was to just pick and choose a number of songs from Altar Boys, Clash of Symbols and my solo material. We recruited a drummer from church named Chris Cummings, and he played most of the drums on the first Altar Billies project. After about a year, Chris decided this just wasn't the music for him. We needed a drummer and I instantaneously thought of Chuck. So, I gave him a phone call and we met for lunch. He decided to give it a try. When he came on board we really took a huge step forward. Chuck brings so much to the table. Like Johnny, he is good people. Down the Line really needs to do a feature on Chuck, he has soooooo many stories, and as you know he has played with everyone!!

So with Chuck on board, we released our first little project in 2010 featuring tracks with both Chuck and Chris on drums. We were still trying to figure it out. Some of the songs came out pretty good, but it was a first effort, and the idea was to just get something out there. We are all especially fond of "The One," particularly the instrumental version, which is an unreleased song by the Altar Boys by the way.

Again the original idea behind Altar Billies was to just pick and choose songs from my catalog, give them the rockabilly treatment, and go out and play a few churches in the area. Then a funny thing happened in early 2011. I began writing songs again. I'm not sure how or why it happened, I just sat down one evening when no one



was around and gave it a shot and started writing a simple song called "Heaven Came Down To You" – a slower country ballad that I'm still undecided on what to do with it. Then I decided we needed something fast and crazy, and within a few minutes I penned "Hold On." The guys loved it! So I thought well maybe I can write a few more. By the end of the year I had penned about 6 songs including "I'm Still Stand'n." It was a complete surprise to me, as I had not really sat down and done any serious songwriting in years. You see, songwriting is like a muscle, if you don't work it, then atrophy sets in. I was sure I would never be able write a song at the same level, when I was at the top of my game. It just goes to show you, "that with God all things are possible."

So I just kept writing songs, particularly in the summer months. I would bring songs to the band that I felt we needed, and then we would just arrange them accordingly. None of the tunes are really difficult, it was just a matter of making sure we knew them well enough before we went out and played them live. Particularly my parts, I am sort of the weak link in this group when it comes to that: making sure I have all the lyrics memorized, guitar parts figured out, ya know things that used to be easy for me when life was simple, but is a little more difficult these days.

None of the tracks for *Head'n Out West* were easy to write, they all took me a while and I am fond of each song. I suppose if I had to go with a favorite track it might be "Ballad of the Big Boy." I am such a huge train enthusiast (I drive Johnny and Chuck crazy with my fine knowledge of trains that they could care less about). So when I came across the news that Union Pacific was going to restore Big Boy steam locomotive 4014 back to running condition I was like "yeah! How cool!" I always thought it was a pity to see this steam giant sitting idle in a train museum (but beautifully kept in great condition by the folks at "Rail Giants," I might add); permanently kept from doing what it was intended to do – fly down the rails at full throttle. It is no surprise then that those in the railroad community wildly celebrated the news about the future restoration of Big Boy 4014!

For yucks I did a search to find out if anyone had written a song dedicated to "The Titans of the Wasatch." After all, there was plenty of great songs written about other trains: "Orange Blossom Special," "Wabash Cannonball," "Casey Jones," and "Mystery Train," to name a few. I reasoned that someone must have penned a song about the world's most powerful steam locomotive. I was dumfounded to discover that not a single song was dedicated to this monumental piece of railroad history. I thought to myself: "What? This isn't right." I decided to have a go at it and see I could write a song that would honor and capture the essence of this locomotive. I researched the specs and information about The Big Boy, and used it as a resource to help form the lyrics of the song. Within 2 weeks time I had composed the "Titans of the Wasatch (Ballad of the Big Boy.)"

So that is the story behind that song, but each tune on *Head'n Out West* really does have a story of its own, and an important reason why I wrote it. I will end this by saying it is an amazing experience working with Johnny and Chuck, there is no way I could even come close to doing this without them. Altar Billies is by no means "Michael W and band," we are very much a group. Sure, I might write all of the songs, but without their input and honesty there is no way it would work. I'll never forget Chuck's comment when he first heard my demo of *Head'n Out West*, it was something to the affect of "yeah, you might want to keep work'n a little more on

that one." If they tell me a part or a song is not quite right, I believe them and fix it, especially when they both agree on something then I know I am had. That's what makes this endeavor work, is that we collaborate with the idea of lets make the song work, and that is such an important factor for any group to function properly.

**Altar Billies has also been playing a good bit live, are there more plans to keep playing live and any chance of branching out and hitting the trail on a tour?**

Yes, we play about 2 times a month. Speaking of which, I had mentioned earlier that when we started the Altar Billies figured we would be playing for local churches in the area. Winds up that we rarely play churches, it isn't for lack of trying, it just kind of wound up being something different than we first envisioned. We have been performing at a lot of street fairs, clubs and other events and it looks like we are going to be regulars at a wonderful facility called the Anaheim Packinghouse District (an upscale indoor food mall with an amazing atmosphere and setup). In most situations, we do about half covers and half our own material. As of this writing we just booked a gig at the Anaheim House of Blues on September 11. What we really want to do is continue to be a light in the rockabilly community in Southern California. We are hoping to be included on more "bills" with local rockabilly bands; I am convinced that is somewhere we need to be. I mean we have been going that route to some extent, but we are trying to make this occur on a regular basis. With that said, there is plenty of work to do here. We may do "one off" festival (fly in date) or something, but with work and family it is sometimes just enough to do what we do locally. I will say there are plans to do an online/internet performance late in fall, as well as a new video for the song "Aim'n High" off *Head'n Out West*.

Let me close by saying thank you for supporting us veteran musicians that have been doing this for a while. Also, Chuck and I (Johnny is quite a bit younger than us) are living proof that you are never too old to try something new or take on new challenges. There is no reason to let age or the past hold you back. We look in the Bible at so many that were called in their later years, like Abraham. This notion that when you reach a certain age you have to spend your time on the golf course is nonsense. It might not be your thing to want to start another band, but there is plenty of work to be done for the kingdom "the harvest is ripe and the workers are few." I am grateful that God has given me another chance to play and write, it was unexpected, but it has not been without a price. I don't know how long it will last, but even if I were to stop now, this was a huge success and good investment of my time, treasure and talent.

<https://www.facebook.com/altarbillies>

<http://www.reverbnation.com/altarbillies>

# Dan Zimmerman: Sojourner Of Creativity And Freedom

*SOMETIMES  
SUNDAY*

**Doug Peterson: Dan, you were a founding member of Subterranean Café? Can you tell us about that band?**

Dan Zimmerman: The band arose out of an idea. I wanted to form a group that witnessed for Christ by going UNDER the conscious wall of opposition to the gospel rather than continue the seemingly fruitless argumentative battering against it. Initially some kindred souls got together at my house to plan our attack, drafting what I called "The Subterranean Manifesto." The drummer was Steve Bakunas, a vibrant and adventurous soul who had been touring with Circus Vargas when he decided to drop out of that and live with my family. I played him the songs I was writing. He decided to buy a drum set he saw at a pawnshop. We started practicing in our Portland living room in about 1982. The first name for the group was Gentle Dove and the Snake Crushers. Sean Boyle was the first bass player. In '83 Bud Renderer became bassist. Blair Stevenson started recording us about that time (the first Subterranean Café album) and decided he wanted to play with us, things really began to jell. Blair passed on last year. I miss him a lot.



*Subterranean Café, under bridge in Portland, 1985*

**Where did Subterranean Café play? What kind of venues, and what audience did you attract?**

Well, I have to mention first that most musicians in the churches, including the very dynamic Jesus Movement churches, were worship leaders. Blair and I led worship in our respective churches. But the sixties had really ignited my creative imagination as to the possibilities of song writing. I wanted to express the spiritual

drama in my heart out in the clubs and bars, through rock and roll! We played the Satyricon a lot. The owner George and I really hit it off. He had a Greek Orthodox background. We played alongside a Christian Motorcycle Club when they visited youth prisons, like the one in Naselle, Washington. A few adventurous small town churches like Eureka and Silverton G.O. and "Festivals of the Son" in California hosted us. Once we opened for Chuck Girard of Love Song, a very early Christian rock group. A good crowd had come to see him. I think we surprised them a bit. Gospel Outreach, my home fellowship, was a very bold and daring group in the eighties. They encouraged us for the most part. Oh, yes, we also played shows with other early Christian rock bands like Flock 14 at the Melody Ballroom and The Clergy at the X-Ray. I think we attracted the ears and hearts of those who were willing to allow themselves to admit they really dug us. I was never convinced we had much of a "following," although a few years back I talked to Terry Scott Taylor and he said he knew of us.

**You have also done some solo albums. Can you describe those projects?**

Aside from the band albums with Subterranean Café and Threads of Gold, and the Sounds Familyre Records albums, I did 5 solo projects.

*Tucson Recording* (1969): My first record. A mix of original and cover songs recorded by Jim Brady (who still runs a studio in Tucson) with his high school bud, Michael Ronstadt, Linda's brother.

*Whatever* (1971): An album cobbled together in Portland Oregon with Timothy Hill, dear friend and gifted son of a theatre family. Timothy graces my newest album, *Dreams of Earth* with his fine vocal harmony.

*The Nursery Tapes* (1978): Recorded on a borrowed reel to reel while working in Wind River Nursery, a government tree nursery in Washington state, just south of Mt. St Helens before she blew. The first time I sought to express my faith in song.

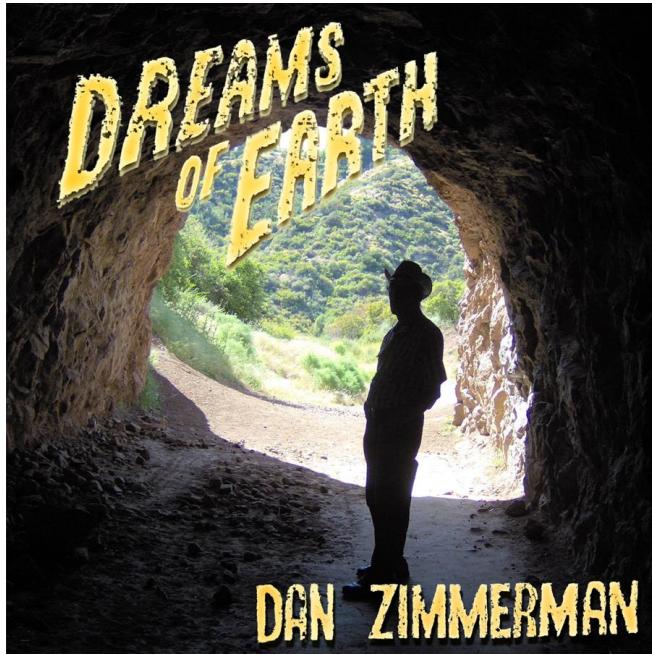
After the first two Subterranean Café albums, self-titled and *When Dinosaurs Melt*,

*More At Stake* (1986): Recorded at home on a Tascam 4-track cassette recorder. One of my favorite projects. An oddity for sure. Experimental stuff.

After the acoustic band Threads of Gold album and the 3rd Subterranean Café record, *Right on Target, Stand By Night* (1992): Produced by my loyal friend and brother, Tony Tuck, and recorded by Craig Russell. An album of hymns and original songs. Love songs for the brethren.

Then we moved to New Jersey where, thanks to Aron Noll, I got hooked up with Daniel Smith. So far I've done three Sounds Familyre albums, *Great Small, Cosmic Patriot* and *Dreams of Earth*.

*Northwest Years* (1999): A compilation CD produced by friend and colleague Tim McAllister. Selected tracks (both band and solo projects) from the 15 years I spent making music in Portland.



I absolutely love the lyric/illustration book that accompanied your self-titled Subterranean Café tape. It is one of my favourite artistic endeavors for any tape I've owned. What merits have that tape/booklet received?

Merits received? Just the kind and perceptive expressions of appreciation from kindred hearts like your own here and there through the years. When I was very young (about 9) in South Central L.A. circa 1957 I used to make little illustrated books with my oldest creative friend Robert Illes (who went on to become an Emmy winning television writer). His character was a detective and mine was a cowboy. We are still fast friends and often talk about making books again. I am thinking about a graphic novel memoir.

#### What musical artists or bands inspire you?

My father, Gilbert S. Zimmerman, was my greatest musical inspiration. He was originally going to become a professional singer. He sang in a quartet (in the thirties) alongside the great John Raitt, Bonnie's father. But then he became a Methodist minister.

Hymns...certain ineffably deep and majestic hymns from the Methodist hymnal.

The beauty of fifties rock n' roll. Innumerable marvelous classic songs. Truly the Golden Age of American Rock n' Roll. Elvis Presley at Sun Studios. Ricky Nelson and his band, The Everly Brothers.

The seemingly limitless possibilities of music exemplified by the sixties. Bob Dylan opened up for me the lyric potential of song. Tim Buckley (and later Jeff, his gifted son), Fred Neil, Tim Hardin. I also loved Jimi Hendrix, Frank Zappa, the Stones. The Beatles were huge of course; they were both rock n' roll and classical.

The beauty of several distinctly different things happening at once. The torque and synergy of rockabilly. Vocal harmony. The

contrapuntal sublimity of Johann Sebastian Bach, the Everly Brothers, the Byrds, Fleet Foxes.

During the last twenty years I've been moved by seemingly disparate and different artists. The Ramones, Gram Parsons, Arcade Fire, Big Star, Television, and The Replacements.

I must admit, especially recently, there's a great amount of what to me is terrible music being made. I almost feel like I need to shield myself from it. I speak especially of what today is considered "pop" or what is championed by the current rage, music "talent" shows. The award shows are almost unendurable for me.



*Soft Avon*

Let's hear about your paintings. How did you begin painting? What is/are your preferred style of painting?

I began to draw first, before I wrote, before I took up guitar. Drawing is the way one begins to paint. I did a few sporadic paintings in the early sixties, and then of course when I studied painting in college at Syracuse University. But it wasn't until the late eighties that I began to consistently keep my hand in. Typically I will go out and do a lot of drawing. Recently I've been leaning more and more on charcoal as my favorite drawing medium. Eventually I come up with a few drawings that want to be transposed into paintings. In painting I prefer oil. It stays workable longer. And it has weight.

Some of the paintings I've seen of yours hold so much imagination and depth. It is almost as if you are looking out of a window or over a balcony into something lush and breathtaking. Other paintings are like snapshots while in motion of an event that is captivating and fluid. Do you start with a concept or do you let your paintings evolve?

I think what you are attempting to describe is the very thing that draws me to the creative process. In this world do we not feel captive? The march of time presses us inexorably forward. Space holds us within each particular confine we happen to be in. And yet we know in our spirit that there is much more to life. Inwardly we know that, in truth, we are free in Christ. But our desire is that the outward would commingle with the inward. We turn to our

calling as makers, and co-creators. In and through the creative process our feeling of captivity is overcome and transcended. We reach a promontory, the sort of balcony you referred to, and suddenly find we can look backwards and forwards in time. And Space does not wall us in. The canvas becomes a portal, a means of walking through walls.

*Joy Foam**Hand of the Maker*

**Does your art get shown at places or exhibits? Do you do paintings on commission?**

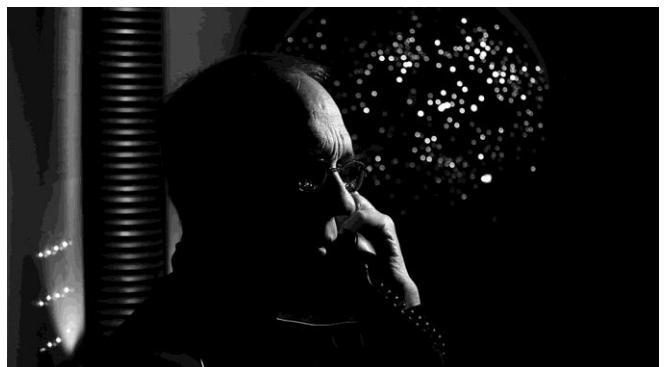
I've shown some. Some juried exhibits. Some music shows where I bring paintings along to display while I play. Sometimes they project paintings/images on a screen behind me like at the Knitting Factory in New York.

*Dan at the Knitting Factory, NYC*

I have not been satisfied with the experience of doing commissions in the past. I would consider a commission, however, if the painting can be based on a pre-existent drawing of mine.

**Who are your favourite painters, both historically and in contemporary art?**

Expressionism. Vincent Van Gogh, Chaim Soutine, Charles Burchfield, Marsden Hartley, Jackson Pollock. The black and white expressionist vein of film has also influenced me deeply (as reflected in the b&w paintings done from '92 to 2002, and my black& white sci-fi film, *Space Pilgrim*, which can be seen on YouTube).

*by Malachi Matcho, from "Space Pilgrim"*

Other artists and influences which were big for me are Wassily Kandinsky, Emily Carr, Mad Magazine (the earliest issues), Famous Monsters of Filmland, Giotto, Arthur Dove, Pinkham Ryder, Gustave Dore, Dostoyevsky, and Thomas Mann.

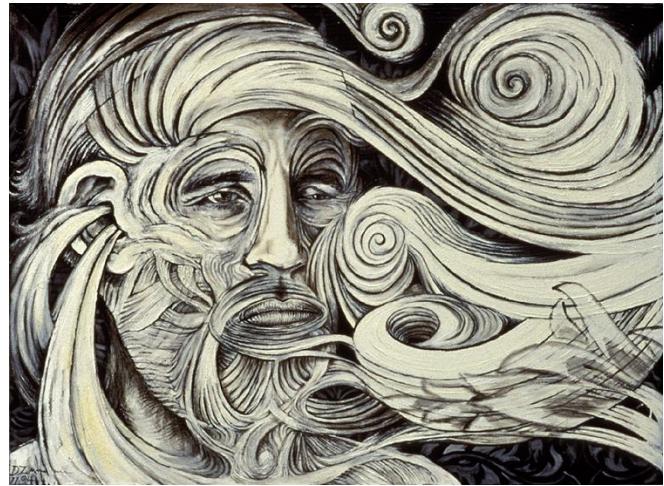


*Dogman*

I used to see your drawings in the high-end audio magazine, *Positive Feedback*, which was edited by our mutual friend, David Robinson. I always knew they were your drawings because they had a unique caricature all of their own. They would contain a caption from our faith tradition which was both clever and subtle. Describe the kind of imagination you envisioned to capture with those illustrations.

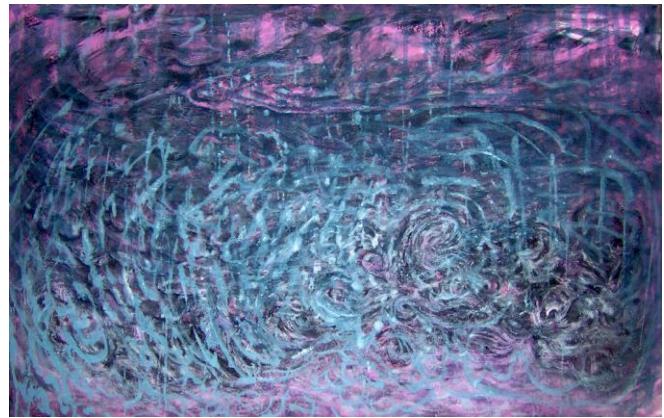
David Robinson has been a dear friend and a profound encouragement to me as an artist for many years. The *Positive Feedback* drawings were kicked off by discussions David and I would have. They were fragmentary visions, springboards for inconclusive reflection. I wanted each drawing to be, as Denis de Rougement so aptly described, a work of art, "a trap for meditation." I know, it sounds like the Subterranean Manifesto all over again.

**How do you approach faith with art? Do you understand being an artist as a vocation?**



*Muse*

You can only become what you are. I don't remember who said that, but it's true. If an artist does not see their creative work as a vocation - a calling, how will they endure? There is a constant temptation to feel guilty about what you do, because it serves no "useful" purpose as far as the world system is concerned, and often in the church as well, a situation which is most grievous. I begin to quote Nicolas Berdyaev. He has probably had a greater influence on me than any human, besides my father. His writing provided a spiritual context for my calling as an artist. He wrote so many powerful and pertinent things concerning the creative act. I don't recall the exact wording, but he said that an artist is continually under pressure to justify their work. In truth, however, the artist is justified BY their work.



*The Mist of Comfort*

Nicolai Berdyaev said that freedom is an essential element of human life and that human creativeness is complementary to God's creativeness. How has this held out in your own creative journey?

It was for freedom that Christ set us free. In my life, the most potent experiences of freedom I have felt have been during the emergence of a new work, whether it be when the band is performing a new song for the first time, or when a new painting is taking shape seemingly out of nothing. Berdyaev, I believe, was way out there, ahead of us on the road. He intimated that we would have a direct hand in the transfiguration of all things. What is the New Jerusalem? If the Kingdom of God is within us, what will the Second Coming be? Just what IS a New Heaven and a New

Earth? I quote Berdyaev: "Art is a creative breakthrough into a transfigured world, and its meaning lies in the fact that it is the anticipation of the transfiguration of the world." Creativity and freedom are inextricably intertwined.



**Mowing the Lawn**

I see on your Facebook page that you've been playing lately as Dan Zimmerman & The Torquebillies? How would you describe the music you guys do?

The term Torquebilly is reflective of the music we play. It has substantial torque and a bit of billy. Like my music has always been, these are pilgrim songs, filled this time with a more complex weave of guitar music, in a bed of sweet vocal harmonies. And yet it really rocks at certain junctures. Call it ethereal grit. Imagine a seeker wandering through Memphis. I believe at the time these songs were evolving, Tony and I were listening to a lot of Gram Parsons, classic country, rockabilly... so these influences are evident.

Tony Jones, my fast friend and guitar mate, happens to be from England, the Midlands to be exact. Why is it that we need the Brits to remind us of our Nation's musical riches? He plays a sweet electric lead line typically around and over my acoustic guitar. Wayne Taussig on bass and Adrian Valosin on drums round out the Torquebillies.

On the album *Dreams of Earth* we are graced with gorgeous supporting vocals from Timothy Hill and Elin K. Smith. Timothy is one of the few people whose vocal timbre really complements mine. As noted before, we had collaborated before on an album in Portland in 1971. Elin K. Smith, of the pioneering group Danielson, wife of my longtime compatriot and producer at Sounds Familyre

Records, Daniel Smith, has a gorgeously delicate way of singing over the top of the proceedings.

#### How can people purchase your music or buy art from you?

Soundsfamilyre.com for *Northwest Years* and my last three albums. I am currently working on transferring all the other recordings (previously on aging cassettes) to CDs, and will announce these when the project has been completed. I am also developing a web site to display and make my paintings and drawings available for purchase.

In the meantime I intend to upload examples of my visual work onto Facebook, where I have both a personal page and a "Dan Zimmerman & the Torquebillies" band page.

The art work I intend to organize into photo albums on my personal Facebook page. Anyone interested in purchasing pieces could initiate an inquiry by sending me a personal message there. Interested people can also go to [soundsfamilyre.com](http://soundsfamilyre.com) where links to all sites I develop will be found.

#### Parting thoughts?

I am so grateful for this. Thank-you, Doug. Thank-you editors of Down The Line.

In closing, I would express the hope that these things might embolden fellow artists of faith. Berdyaev described the creative calling as "the sainthood of daring." Art as witness. I believe there are many kindred out there who don't even know it yet. My wife, Robin, and I often quote a writer (forgot the name) who stated that "the way to the universal was through the intensely personal." When Jesus said "I AM the door," I believe the emphasis was upon Being as much as it was upon Access. By exploring the creative freedom of being in Christ we disclose the beauty of the Kingdom. For why would someone want to go through the door if they saw nothing beautiful, if they saw nothing desirable, nothing which they already identified with or yearned for?

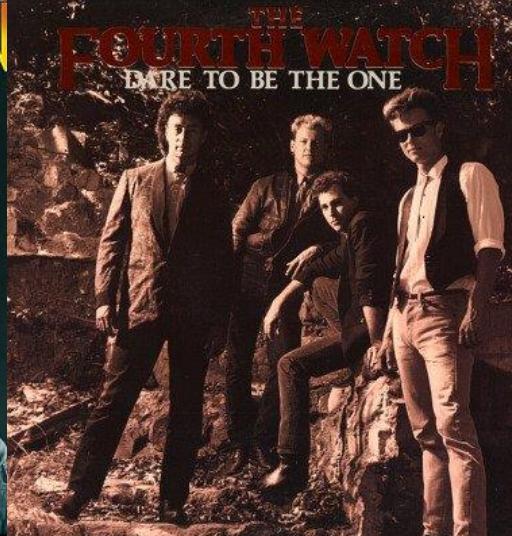
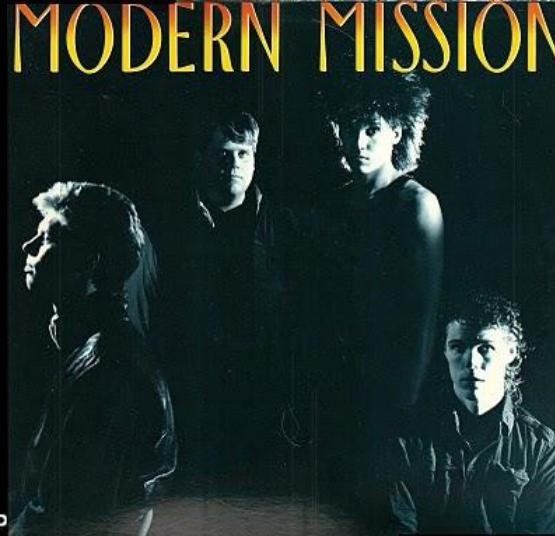
I continue to be moved by what Leslie Fiedler said of Simone Weil: "She was planted at the intersection of Christianity and everything that is not Christianity. She refused to cut herself off from anyone..." We become who we are as we see something of ourselves in everything and everyone else.

Or, as Teilhard de Chardin said, "Everything that rises must converge."



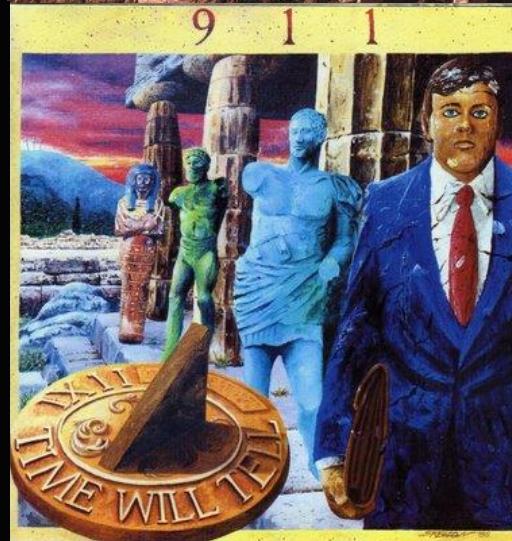
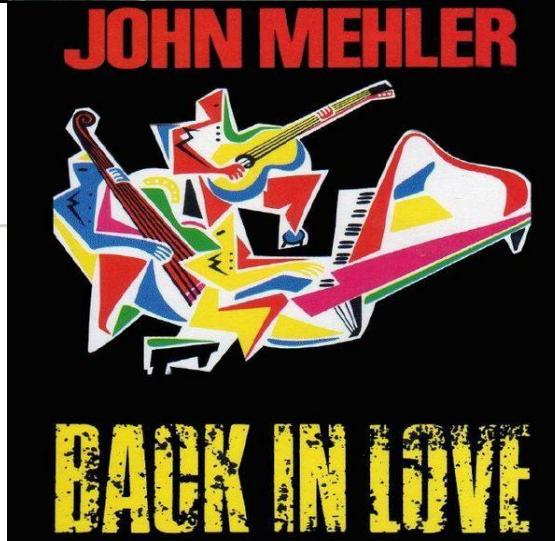
**Torquebillies, Princeton B & N, Sept. 2013**

# the IMITATORS



IMITATORS  
SOTIMI

once and for all



## GORDON DRIVER / EXILE RECORDS INTERVIEW

Kevin Noel Olson

For several years, I have sought out information on one of my favorite bands from the 80s. The Imitators only put out two albums on Exile Records, an eponymous 4-song EP and *Once And For All*, a full-length album. They were very impactful on me and my walk through life. Just this month, I finally got in touch with Gordon Driver, the producer and sound engineer with Exile Records, and also its owner. I was very excited, and asked Gordon if I might interview him for Down the Line magazine. The story of Exile Records proved to me to be a very enlightening conversation about The Imitators and the Christian music industry in the 1980s. The interview travelled beyond the bounds of what I expected. Gordon had some interesting things to say about people's individual walk with God. Gordon was able to leave the confines of The Imitators in specific and garner more of a story about Exile Records, Gordon Driver's personal experiences, and the 80s recording industry. He also spoke about why The Imitators and other Exile bands were controversial for the time.

**Gordon, can you offer a history of how The Imitators started?**

At the time I was working for Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa, and was producing records for Maranatha Music and also my own label called Exile Records. I mixed many of the live Saturday night concerts from Calvary Chapel for radio broadcast. There are many live tapes of bands like The Choir, The 77s, The Imitators, Undercover, Daniel Amos, The Fourth Watch still locked away at Calvary that I mixed. I found that in the way I produced and engineered music wasn't well received by regular Christian sources. One comment I would hear is, 'your work just sounds too secular.' And I never understood that comment. How can a mix sound too secular?

My albums that I produced on Exile Records were all well-received by Billboard Magazine, and were well-reviewed by Billboard. So, I found myself caught between a rock and a hard place. I felt that I needed to focus on music that I felt had a little more edge to it and that would speak outside the church, and not be concerned so much speaking to people with music they were already listening to. I also did a radio show on KYMS in Southern California called 'The Edge'. I would feature a lot of music featured on the website and cutting-edge type music. I played, back then in

the 80s, I'd be playing U2, The Alarm, Bruce Cockburn and stuff like that. It also did very well because people would be confused. We were on for 3 hours on Saturday night. And they would confuse it with a secular rock station.

Back then, when people had analogue tuners in their car, they would float between stations and the main rock station in L.A. It became an interesting experiment with The Imitators for those looking for bands that had that same concept of cutting edge music. And they (The Imitators) were controversial too, because some of the lyrics were regarded in the Christian community as being very much commercial. I wasn't worried about that. I thought that they were speaking the truth, and the truth is what matters. So I wanted to promote the band.

At first we started with a 4-song EP to see how well that would be received. At the same time I was building a recording studio, and you'll notice a difference between the EP and the album, because I'd acquired a studio with all the best equipment in it. The Neve console was very punchy. That was with Calvary Chapel actually, and we used their equipment to record the second album. That album was very well received by Billboard Magazine, because they thought the mixes were sounding very clean and very professional and they liked that. At the time, I was using anything I could to push music to more of a professional sound.

I engineered a couple of songs with Leslie Phillips. I did those recordings with a very raw sound to them. It's interesting from the whole perspective. The Imitators were coming together. I found them, I worked with them and I liked their attitude.

**That's interesting what you mention about the difference between the EP and *Once And For All*. There does seem a change between the two albums, not in message, yet definitely in direction. Is that fair to say?**

Yeah. It was a definite change in direction and experimentation back then. In the 80s you had the U2 sound, which was recorded in castles and used the reverb of the castle, and you also had The Police, which is very clean and recorded on a Neve mixing console. So, I was looking for a mixture of both in recording The Imitators. So actually I did when we recorded the drums, we recorded the drums without toms. All we did was snare and drums and cymbals. Then we went back and recorded all the fills on the toms separately. The reason why is because you get what is called 'phasing' through the microphones and on the drum kit, and though you may not hear it, it affects the sound of the drums. We wanted to record drums that way, and that's how we got the drum sounds on *Once And For All*. It came out clean and punchy, and that's what we liked about that.

**Can we talk a little about the members of The Imitators? I know the drummer, Richard Cabrera, has sadly passed on. Are the other members still in contact with you and each other?**

They are very much in contact with each other, and they would very much like to get back together. Barry Edge is the pastor of a church now and I feel he is itching to do something again. What occurred after the *Once And For All* album is there was another manager who took over managing the group. I didn't manage the group but I did the album work. The other manager said, 'I want you to leave Exile Records and take you somewhere new.' So they left my company and they went on their own with that manager. They went from California to the East Coast and did some recording and had a hard time.

**Do you know if the recordings following Exile still exist?**

I know they remixed *Once And For All*, and I don't know what happened to those tapes. I don't know if they did any other recordings or not. You can get it from them, but they had a very difficult time.

**Is there a possibility that you might produce a future album with them?**

I love those guys. I thought they were incredible, and the songwriting by Barry was extremely talented. If they ever wanted to talk about it, I'd be willing to talk about it. We have had some communication over the last year back and forth. Nothing's really gone anywhere with it yet.

**I thought The Imitators was a very impressive and unique band, and I've talked to others who were familiar with the albums. Do you feel there was an issue there with The Imitators possibly not recognizing the impact they had?**

Well, back then the sales of albums weren't as strong as they are today, perhaps. Back then there weren't downloads like there are with iTunes. Everything was still vinyl and cassette tape. So, sales-wise, they were distributed by Lexicon/Word records, but that was not anything of a commercial level. I thought the album was very commercial and could have been picked up by a regular label, but that never happened. Today, if they could pull off what they did back then and have the same songwriting, I think they could be a very commercially viable band. If they were interested in doing it again.

**A follow-up to *Once And For All* could be great. Personally, I rate the album as one of the best to come out of the era.**

You know, it's interesting that you wanted to do this interview, because there's another group from Exile Records called The Fourth Watch which was Bill Walden's

group after Undercover. Recently the album has been gaining popularity in Orange County for some reason, and it's developed an attraction. For some reason in the past few weeks, The Fourth Watch album has gained a lot of attention.

#### **What artists were in the Exile Records catalogue?**

Well, we had The Imitators, we had another group called Modern Mission.

#### **I remember Modern Mission very well. I just had them on my player last month.**

And then we had an album with John Mehler, The Fourth Watch, and then The Imitators {insert: 911 as well}.

#### **Can we talk a bit about Modern Mission? I thought they were an interesting group as well.**

Same thing. I was trying to push these bands to be edgier, and Modern Mission, I remember producing that record. At the same time, Bryan Adams was big. I loved the way Bryan Adams sounded in terms of guitars and drums, and so I used that influence on Modern Mission in terms of their music. A lot of music that we produced for Exile Records was driven by passion, and not so much technology. That's the reason for the catalogue being like that. It's a very passionate catalogue. It's a moment of time that occurred back then that was very emotional and like a message to the world, saying, "We're just the same as you. We're Christians, but we're the same as you, except that we have hope." And that really was the message from Exile Records and in general from the artists.

#### **I can think of specific songs that really stick in head from The Imitators, getting back to them. "Paradoxical Faith" from the EP which I could say spoke directly to me. "Once And For All" is a song that's really powerful and heartfelt. Modern Mission's song, "Magazine" is another great one. Do you have any personal favorite songs from the Exile catalogue?**

I have some favorite songs from each artist that I lean on in particular, and most of the songs that really grabbed my attention when I first heard them perform live, and I thought, 'This is great, because it's about a Christian really doubting themselves and doubting their relationship with God, and he's being honest.' That grabbed my attention, and I wanted to reinforce that. Because that can relate to somebody that's having a difficult time with their relationship with God. It was controversial because Christian radio didn't want to hear that stuff. Christian radio back then liked 'Love. Dove. Above.' lyrics. And I was saying, "No. I think we need to address personal relationships with God here."

"Sometimes" is a great song. "Children Of The Lie" I love, but it was very controversial. It's about a boy and a girl in the back of a car, and they're going at each other and they're justifying what they're doing and pretend to have a relationship with God. You know, they're children of the lie. That's another very truthful statement that wouldn't sit very well with Christian radio. It grabbed some attention.

Billboard Magazine talked about it as very controversial in terms of a lyric. But, I don't think we should be afraid to talk about the truth. Certainly, the Bible's not afraid to talk about the truth and exposing people's real warts, you know?

A lot of the things I tried to bring out in the records were based on an early conversation I had with Bruce Cockburn. He said, 'You know, I don't believe anyone's a complete Christian until they're a dead one.' I had to think about that for a while, and I thought, 'You know, you're right. We're always trying to perfect ourselves, but we're not perfected until we die.' We all have struggles and we all wrestle with things, but God is there to give us second chances. As long as we desire to seek God, we can improve our lives. If you decide that you don't want to seek God anymore, it's very hard for me to watch that.

Having tasted the love of God and to turn away from it is a very hard thing to see. Going back to music, there are a lot of people out there who are very marginal Christians, where they've heard the Gospel and they understand there's a relationship with God that you can have, but they have all this baggage in the past, whether they've done drugs or gotten into trouble. They feel they can never be perfected. They can never have that relationship with God, but that's not the way it works. God accepts you as you are right now with all your warts. That's the message I want to get out, because there are so many more people who are like that then there are in the church. Those are the people you want to reach.

I left Exile Records and moved to Hollywood to work with Humberto Gatica who engineered and produced some of the Chicago albums. He taught me about production, engineering, and really high-quality work. It took my career in a whole new direction in terms of film and audio production. I became a protégé to the film director, Sydney Pollack for 12 years. Later in a movie called *Random Hearts*, starring Harrison Ford, I produced and engineered a song for the film at Capitol Records studios in Hollywood using the Elton John band, but I had Darrell Mansfield singing.

Back to Exile Records and favorite songs "Children Of The Lie," "Sometimes," and "Once And For All" is in itself an incredible song. Fourth Watch's "One Truth" is a great song and "Dare To Be One" is another great song. Modern Mission had a song on their album which I thought was a

major hit, and it never really went anywhere. "Magazine" was a great song, but there was another song, "Never Let Me Go," on that album that I really liked. Unfortunately, radio didn't pick it up. The song was kind of timeless, and it could be used today. That again had more of a Bryan Adams feel to it as well. John Mehler's *Back In Love* album, again, very edgy, rock & roll stuff, and departure from his Love Song days. That was a lot of fun too.

**Do you think there's a future for Exile Records, if for example, both The Imitators and Modern Mission came back and said, 'Hey, we'd like to work with you again and produce some music'?**

It all starts with a song. If the songs are there, then you have something to work with, but the songs have to be there. There are so many things a song has to do before it can go on a record. If The Imitators came to me with a catalogue of songs and said to me, 'Okay, we need to pick out 12 songs out of these 40 songs' and if I could find 12 songs I thought were strong enough, then of course I'd be interested in pursuing that. That's the bottom line in Christian music or secular music, or film or anything like that. In music, it's the song. In film, it's the story. Before anything is considered in film, you have to have a story first. The song is critical. The same thing with Modern Mission. Before anything, the song has to be in place. I don't know if there's an audience for it. That's the other thing. You can record an album, but there may not be an audience for it anymore. Back in the 80s, there was, but I don't know if there is today. There might be 500 people who would enjoy it today. I don't know if there would be 100,000 people that would enjoy it, so that's a question to find out.

The advantage of the internet, though, is that you can develop a following, on YouTube for example, and have it go viral. If something was posted to YouTube and it went viral, that would be justification to record an album. It's a balancing act of great songs and whether the audience wants it or not.

**If you don't mind saying and you might recall, what were the sales numbers for The Imitators and Modern Mission or other Exile bands?**

They were reasonable, back then. It wasn't as good as Daniel Amos. Daniel Amos started out with Maranatha Music, so they started out with more of a commercial following with a country-rock thing. We came out with our edginess right off the bat and were not commercial. That's the difference between the two bands, and I love Daniel Amos and I know those guys well. I don't know if there's an audience anymore for it. It's definitely a moment in time.

I know there's an interest in music in general, and if that were to develop some momentum I'm sure a lot of this

stuff would come out of the woodwork. Sales-wise, The Imitators definitely got a lot of attention. Maybe not record sales, but they definitely got a lot of radio airplay. I remember that. Because the songs were controversial, I remember hearing comments about it. 'Why did you play the song about people doubting their relationship with God?' On Christian radio, that was a pretty radical thing back then. It intrigued people. Plus, I had my regular show on Saturday nights for 3 hours, and I was able to play things like that and give it exposure, and I'd been playing The 77s and Daniel Amos and other stuff as well as Exile Records and it really developed some momentum in an audience of younger listeners that weren't mainstream Christianity, but they wanted a relationship with God. So, that's why we called the radio show The Edge.

**Would you mind speculating on the direction of The Imitators and what a third album for Exile Records might have been?**

Yes, they had lots of other songs, and I felt they were progressing nicely. I felt that they were maturing quite rapidly. You heard the first 4-song EP, and you saw rapid growth between the EP and *Once And For All*. The third album I think would have been huge, and until they made the wrong turn, the songs were probably out there. I heard some of them, and I know that Barry Edge is an incredibly talented songwriter and had an arsenal of songs. There just needs to be an audience.

**Thank you Gordon for this interview. It's been very enlightening into a time period and the bands from Exile Records and The Imitators. I'd like to give you a chance to have a last comment for the Down the Line readers. Anything you'd like to say?**

It's exciting to see people are still interested in this music, and I'd like to encourage anyone who is getting into music to use a lot of the same tools that these guys did in terms of a message. To pursue music with a passion, and be less concerned with the technology and more concerned with the story, the song, and the passion. That's the emotional contact with the audience. It's the longevity of any group. I'm always looking for that; even today. If I found someone that I was interested in working with, then I would jump at the opportunity to do that. Everything has to be in place. Great songs, good distribution for the record, and an audience that wants to buy it. For you guys that are coming up, to have that in your hearts. Wanting to tell the truth. The truth is what will hold you, and will make your song last forever.

# BRIAN GODAWA

**Down the Line Magazine Interview  
with Mike Indest**

The last time we caught up with Brian Godawa was right before the books *Joshua Valiant* and *Calab Vigilant* were released. Since then he has come out with *When Giants Were On The Earth* and *David Ascendant*.

This series is fascinating, full of great writing and has caused me and I'm sure most other readers to look deeper into God's word. This is one "Christian" book series that I am not embarrassed to recommend to Christians and non-Christian alike.

So, lets get to it!

**Brian, the appendices of all the books in the *Chronicles of the Nephilim* series has in depth research on the Nephilim, the Watchers and the War of the Seed. You recently published the book *When Giants Were Upon The Earth* that contains all the research from the books. Why did you think it was important to put all of this research together in one book?**

Originally, my purpose was twofold. First, I was concerned that the imaginative license I was taking with the Bible stories might be misunderstood by some Bible believers, who would be my dominant audience. I wanted to respect their high view of Scripture by providing them with the Biblical and ancient historical research behind my creative choices so they could appreciate the creative imagination that the Bible itself displays. It's not as literalistic as we sometimes think.

But secondly, I am just one of those bipolar people who love both the intellectual scholarly side of things as well as the imaginative creative side. I love to discover what truths fiction is founded upon. Michael Crichton, one of my personal writing heroes, would always put an appendix at the end of his fictional novels that explained the real science that his speculation was rooted in. I always appreciated that so much that I figured I would do the same for the theological research that my speculative fiction was rooted in.

**Looking at the Bible through the lens you propose made me rethink how I view the entire Bible. This was indeed a paradigm shift. Why does this seem to be a new way of looking at the scripture?**

It is a paradigm shift. It comes from a closer look at the original ancient Near Eastern background of the Bible writers and their readers and audience. You uncover your own modern bias when reading the text. When I discovered the "Divine Council" that is in the Bible through scholar Michael S. Heiser's work, it started to piece together so many weird things I had read in the Bible, but just ignored or chalked up to "we can't understand everything."

But the more I read Canaanite poetry and texts as well as ancient Sumerian, Akkadian, and other Mesopotamian literature, I began to see common memes, motifs and metaphors in the Bible that now stuck out. Because of course, the Bible was written by men of similar backgrounds and cultures as these ancient texts and their authors.

That ancient Near Eastern and Biblical paradigm shift is a narrative. In brief, it is that God has a divine council of divine beings called "Sons of God," or "gods," (Psa 82; 89:5-8) who counsel with him and do his bidding and errands (Job 1; 2; 1 King 22). Around the time of Noah, a group of these supernatural angelic Sons of God came to earth in rebellion against God and sought to violate the separatedness of God's creation and pollute the human bloodline of Messiah as war against God's Promise (Gen 3:15). They mated with human women who birthed giants called Nephilim (Gen 6:1-4). God destroyed them at the Flood, but the Nephilim bloodline survived. At the Tower of Babel, God divided the nations and put their geographical territories under the authority of rebel Sons of God, while maintaining Israel for himself (Deut 32:8-11). The Nephilim clans expanded and filled the Promised Land of Canaan, so God had to wipe them out to gain control of his territory (Num 13:32-33; Josh 11:21-22). But some giants survived in Philistia and sought to kill the Messiah Seed, David (2Sam 21:16-22; 1Chron 11:24-25). David finished off the last of the giants as a type of the Messiah, Jesus, who would have the last battle with the spirits of the dead Nephilim as demons (Matt 12; 1Enoch 15:8-16:1), who through his death and resurrection would destroy the power of Satan (Heb 2:14), who was the territorial spirit over Rome that oppressed Israel (Matt 4; Jn 12:31). Jesus would go into Sheol to claim his ultimate triumph over those primary principalities and powers he had imprisoned at the Flood (2Pet 2:4-6; Jude).

When I discovered all these things were connected in a storyline thread that was part of Israel's "War of the Seed of the Serpent with the Seed of the Woman," (Gen 3:15) it all began to make sense. And it is all wrapped up in the New Testament notion of Christ's victory over the principalities and powers of this world.

**I finished both *Joshua Valiant* and *Calab Vigilant* quite quickly since they were both page turners. I don't want to give too much away but there was a name change with a character to the name we recognize in the Bible that I was not expecting at all! Why do you change a lot of the characters names in this series?**

Name changes was a peculiar technique universally engaged in by all ancient Near Eastern writing including the Bible because in that world, names were not merely arbitrary sign references. Names reflected the essential purpose, meaning, or achievement of people or places. Thus, when people experienced significant changes in their lives, they might also change their name or the name of a location where it occurred (Abram to Abraham, Sarai to Sarah, Saul of Tarsus to Paul). Or when one nation adopted another nation's deity, it would give it their own name. Even the God of the Bible uses different

names for himself in different instances to communicate his different attributes (El Shaddai, Yahweh, Adonai, Elohim: Ex 6:3). While this is not familiar to modern readers and can cause difficulty in keeping all the names and identities straight, I chose to employ that peculiar technique as a way of incarnating the ancient worldview and mindset. I want to help readers think like the ancient world as they read it.

**I think most people will at least admit to one giant in the Bible, Goliath. How are you approaching this story in the latest edition of the series *David Ascendant*?**

In several Biblical passages of David's story, we read of five other giants than Goliath who were called "The descendants of the giants" in some translations (1Chron 20:4-8; 11:20-25; 2Sam 21:16-22). They are described in context as seeking to kill David. They were so significant, that three of them were named. One of them was the brother of Goliath, whose name was Lahmi (revenge, anyone?). Interestingly, the phrase in Hebrew for "descendants of the giants" is actually more like "devotees of Rapha," which would be the kind of designation given to a sacred military cult devoted to a giant deity (since Rapha is singular for "Rephaim," which meant giants). In my book I update that phrase to "Sons of Rapha" for stylistic purposes (a hinted reference to the Sons of God). So my story focuses in on those giants as they hunt down David, in order to destroy him as the Messianic Seed of Eve. I take a closer look at the world of the Philistines and their gods, and I even show the fallen Watchers masquerading as those pagan deities, since the Bible does describe them as demonic, not merely non-existent (Deut 32:17; 1Cor 10:18-20).

**So exactly how tall was Goliath?**

There is much scholarly debate about this. I write about it on my [blog here](#). The controversy comes from there being multiple manuscript sources that give different dimensions for Goliath. The Hebrew manuscripts say 6 cubits and a span (which is about 9 feet, 9 inches). But a more ancient translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, has some manuscripts that say 4 cubits and a span (which is more like 6 feet 9 inches). But an interesting complication arises when one discovers that the Egyptian royal cubit, which is the cubit Moses was raised with, is a bigger cubit dimension than the standard cubit. So one scholar suggests that some of the Septuagint translators, who were Egyptian, may have been translating down to their taller Egyptian cubit. Using the Egyptian cubit (about 20.65 inches versus the standard cubit of 18 inches), that 4 cubits and a span would be about the same nine foot dimension as the Hebrew text. But either way, Goliath was huge compared to the rather small average height of many Israelites at about 5 foot 5 inches.

**The final book in the series is *Jesus Triumphant. Nephilim at the time of Christ, really?***

Well, I can't give too much away. But believe me, there are a lot of spiritual things going on in the Jesus story regarding Watchers and Nephilim that we are not aware of without this

ancient Near Eastern context. But suffice it to say that while there are no giants in the Gospels, there are demons. And the Bible nowhere says that demons are "fallen angels." That is a Medieval notion that we picked up and now falsely assume. The Bible doesn't say at all where demons come from. But there is an ancient text that does. That is the book of 1Enoch. Though it is not Scripture, it is quoted favorably by Scripture (in Jude and elsewhere). Get a load of this:

**1 Enoch 15:8-16:1**

"But now the giants who are born from the (union of) the spirits and the flesh shall be called evil spirits upon the earth, because their dwelling shall be upon the earth and inside the earth. Evil spirits have come out of their bodies. Because from the day that they were created from the holy ones they became the Watchers; their first origin is the spiritual foundation. They will become evil upon the earth and shall be called evil spirits... And these spirits shall rise up against the children of the people and against the women, because they have proceeded forth (from them)... From the days of the slaughter and destruction, and the death of the giants... they will corrupt until the day of the great conclusion, until the great age is consummated, until everything is concluded (upon) the Watchers and the wicked ones."<sup>1</sup>

I'll leave you with that juicy tidbit. If your readers want to know more, go to my website for links to scholarly articles and to sign up for updates on the series.

**These books are a great read and make wonderful gifts. The series are available both in print and digital versions, where are they available?**

BRIAN: Amazon.com! [http://www.amazon.com/Brian-Godawa/e/B001KI8CH4/ref=ntt\\_atr\\_dp\\_pel\\_1](http://www.amazon.com/Brian-Godawa/e/B001KI8CH4/ref=ntt_atr_dp_pel_1)

But also, go to [www.ChroniclesOfTheNephilim.com](http://www.ChroniclesOfTheNephilim.com) to see book trailers, author videos, cool artwork and free articles on all things Nephilim. Sign up for updates on the series!

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<sup>1</sup> James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1 (New York; London: Yale University Press, 1983), 22.

# Josh Lory Top 20 2014

**1. Bill Mallonee & the Darkling Planes – *Winnowing* –** Underrated, underappreciated, consistent, amazing, heart on the sleeve, lyrics cut deep, these are a few words that come to mind when I think of Bill Mallonee. *Winnowing* holds my two favorite songs of 2014, both expressed a lot of what's been on my mind lately, "Got Some Explaining To Do (gotta give the devil his due)" and "In The New Dark Age (The only lamp burning bright is you)". Mallonee dipped back into his later VOL and early solo past bringing back some of his 60's British Invasion influence on a few of these tunes, bravo Bill! Self-produced and handling most of the instrumentation, the man really out did himself as he does every album. Get this album, support this artist!!!

**2. The Brian Jonestown Massacre – *Revelation and the + - EP* –** One of my top all time bands, I got to see them early on this year in Oakland, they are truly amazing! Each new album is getting closer and closer to their early sound that I love so much. If you have the discography, it's been quite an adventure in music. Anton is one of the few true musical geniuses walking this planet. A mix of Garage, Shoegaze, Psychedelic, Kraut Rock, and beyond, an album you should relax and take the time to explore.

**3. Nothing – *Guilty Of Everything* –** Shoegaze is back!!! This is hands down one of the best Shoegaze albums I have ever heard! All the best parts of early Starflyer 59 and "You'd Prefer an Astronaut" era Hum. Heavy distortion, pounding drums, whisper vocals, droning guitars, beautiful!!! Get this album!!!

**4. Say Anything – *Hebrews* –** Wow, just, Wow! In my opinion Max Bemis is the best arrangers and lyricists out there. He pulls a twist on this album, no guitars! All the guitars are replaced with orchestration, and it works, rock drums, rock bass, keyboards, a ton of great layered vocal harmonies, outstanding album! I'm amazed that not many have caught on to how great this band truly is, I think the early "Emo" label has hurt them. Bemis really lets you into his life at an almost uncomfortable level, bring on the drama!

**5. Chuck Ragan – *Till Midnight* –** My second favorite Americana artist next to Bill Mallonee. I can't be happier that I got to see Chuck play solo and with Hot Water Music in the same year! On this release Ragan brings in a little more Rock into his Country. This guy's voice gets better and better with every album. Chuck walks the walk of a true Americana artist, a mountain man like myself, just found out that he lives pretty close to me in the Sierra Nevada's, maybe I'll run into him fishing someday! Of all the punk singers (and there are a lot) to go the alt Country/Americana direction, he is the best hands down. Check out all his albums and get into Hot Water Music, you will not regret it!

**6. Lagwagon – *Hang* –** Holy crap did I miss this band! 9 years since their last full length and 6 since the last EP released. Like all their albums, this one takes pieces of the previous releases and adds a new twist. These guys have been around since 1992, so by now you'll know if you like them or not. One of the greatest melodic Punk Rock bands ever. I find no faults with them, strong in every department.

**7. Banner Pilot – *Souvenir* –** Great Post Hardcore/Pop Punk in the

vein of Jawbreaker and Samiam, super solid release, digging it more with every listen. Gritty vocals, grinding bass, melodic guitar, mid tempo heavy drums. I need to go back and listen to their previous releases, I think these guys are worth checking out.

**8. Joyce Manor – *Never Hung Over Again* –** Amazing band! This is their longest release topping off at 20 min! 10 songs, all under two and a half minutes, short songs that accomplish more than most bands do in twice that length. One of the newer Noise Pop/ Punk bands to keep your eyes on and your ears open!

**9. C.J. Ramone – *Last Chance To Dance* –** Ramones are my all-time favorite band, C.J. did his brothers proud on this release!

**10. The Altar Billies – *Headin' Out West* –** Mike Stand and company are back with their first full length and it is amazing! 2014 was a good year for new Rock-a-Billy, this, the new Brian Setzer, and the Dave & Phil Alvin albums were all beyond good, but this one topped them for me! Any fan of Sun Studios era Johnny Cash and Roy Orbison or early Stray Cats will dig this. Not that their EP was bad, it is great, but I think Stand really found his inner crooner vocally on this one. All the instrumentation is fantastic, Chuck Cummings can swing, and Johnny X is the man on the upright!

**11. The Lawrence Arms – *Metropole* –** Chi-Town Punk favorites. I like this one a lot, but I don't think they'll ever top *Oh! Calcutta!*. Great 3 piece, 2 singer/songwriters, big fans of Jawbreaker. This is their debut on Epitaph from Fat Wreck, production is higher quality than other releases by the Larry Arms. Both front men are good lyricists and arrangers, they get a lot done in under 3 minutes. Hope the next one doesn't take as long to come out!

**12. The Menzingers – *Rented World* –** Great Pop Punk band that has a heavy Gruff side to them. These guys get a little better with each release. When I think of the Menzingers, I think of passion, it just pours out of the vocals, lyrics, and instruments. I've yet to see them live, but look forward to it someday, heck maybe Western Grace will open up!

**13. 7 Seconds – *Leave A Light On* –** Yes, that 7 Seconds, the 80's Hardcore pioneers are back with their 10th studio album and it rocks start to finish! Everything you would want out of a 7 Sec album is here, blistering riffs, pounding hyper beats, positive lyrics, and a few wo-oh's! They were my first Punk show and hold a special place for me!

**14. Smashing Pumpkins – *Monuments To An Elegy* –** The next to last installment of the "Teargarden By Kaleidyscope" series, which has been by far my favorite albums Corgan has made since the early Pumpkins days. Tommy Lee played drums on this and did an amazing job, he is still one of the best! 9 songs around 33 mins, good beginning to end, most of it has a classic SP vibe to it. From heavy to spacey, this album covers the range.

**15. Elephant Stone – *Three Poisons* –** A little heavier and darker feel in comparison to their previous releases, pulling into BRMC territory at times. A lot more dance beats as well, reminding me of bands like the Stone Roses, Happy Mondays, and Primal Scream. This band nails it on every album, I'm hooked on anything they produce! Psychedelic, Shoegaze, World, Garage Rock, top notch!

**16. Stranger Kings – *Stranger Kings* –** Been waiting a long time for

this album, and it was well worth the wait! Equal parts Lush, New Order, and the Cure, done to perfection! All-star lineup (in my book) can't go wrong! I want more!

**17. Antemasque – *Antemasque*** – Former At The Drive In/Mars Volta members blast on the scene with this incredible new project! When ATDI split two bands formed, Sparta, whom I love, and Mars Volta, they were always a bit much for me, like a modern Santana, great, but not my thing. This release gets the MV boys back into a more straight forward and stripped down Post Punk sound much like early At The Drive In albums. Oh and Flea played bass on much of the album, so yeah, the bass is good!

**18. Against Me! – *Transgender Dysphoria Blues*** – The band's first release since Tom Gabel went through a transformation to Laura Jane Grace and that's what the album's theme focuses on. I like this album and think it's a great thing for the trans gender community, something I can never understand or relate to, being uncomfortable in one's own skin, a lot of pain and confusion throughout the lyrics on this album. The new band line up is great. Fat Mike played bass on the album. Solid record. But what made me a fan of Against Me! is not on this album, it should have been a solo album. Against Me!, to me, is an intense Anarchist Folk Punk act and that is just not there on this release. It has been one crazy ride with this group!

**19. Deni Gauthier – *Quiet Town*** – A wonderful, reflective, mellow, relaxing, album. Deni is one of those guys like Justin McRoberts that could tread into the adult contemporary zone, but remain edgy and rock enough for punks like me to enjoy. Great production, so clean! Deni has an incredible voice to treat your ears to. By far my favorite release of his!

**20. The Rentals – *Lost In Alphaville*** – The Rentals are back! This album solidifies the importance that Matt Sharp had in the early years as a member of Weezer. Just compare this to Weezer's new album, this will blow it out of the water! Soft vocals, heavy drums, distorted bass, killer synth work. Huge sweeping melodies cover this record. A mix of Power Pop, New Wave, and Pop Punk, it's really a brilliant album!

## Doug Peterson Top 6 2014

**White Lighter – *White Lighter***

**Vekora – *Vekora***

**Woven Hand – *Refractory Obdurate***

**Stranger Kings – *Stranger Kings***

**Steve Taylor & The Perfect Foil – *Goliath***

**Unteachers – *A Human Comedy***

## Matt Crosslin Top 21 2014

This is more like my favorite album of the year and then Top 20 that are impossible to rank in alphabetical order ☺

**U2 - *Songs of Innocence (Deluxe Edition)*** – Lot of hate for this album, but I find it to be the best one of 2014 by far. The deluxe version has two bonus songs that totally push it over the edge.

**Nate Allen & The Pac-Away Dots – *Take Out The Trash*** – Not out yet, but I heard the pre-release and this rocks.

**The Altar Billies – *Headin' Out West*** – Mike Stand & Co. continue to improve on each release. And I'm not even a rockabilly fan.

**Atash – *Music is Everything*** – World music that focuses on Middle Eastern but mixes many more influences in.

**The Bombay Royale – *The Island of Dr. Electrico*** – Bollywood Funk that is one of the coolest world music albums this year.

**Champion Leader – *4st*** – Major throw back to the 80s that showcases why that decade was so awesome by J. Bozeman of Luxury fame.

**Elephant Stone – *Three Poisons*** – They continue to go down the psychedelic indie rock path... and they continue to impress.

**Deni Gauthier – *Quiet Town*** – Deni continues to grow on each release. This one is deep and worth the trip.

**Gov't Hate Mail – *Gov't Hate Mail*** – Loud, raw, and in your face

**Jagged Doctrine – *Electrocuted*** – I can never get enough of industrial metal, and Jagged Doctrine is still one of the best.

**Jupiter 6 – *Moveable Walls*** – Jimmy Brown does Pink Floyd!

**Luxury – *Trophies*** – Got the pre-release, but trust me: this is really good. The Luxury guys still got it.

**Secret Archives of the Vatican – *Storytellers*** – World electronic music that never disappoints.

**ShiSho – *The Sisters EP*** – Massive growth in songwriting since the last EP, these sisters are major contenders.

**Stranger Kings – *Stranger Kings*** – They took their time on this and it shows. Everything that you like about alternative and none of the things you don't.

**Steve Taylor & The Perfect Foil – *Goliath*** – Taylor & Co. deliver on the hype. Possibly one of Taylor's best efforts ever.

**Swimsuit Grandma – *Barely There*** – Mike Indest continues to grow and push boundaries.

**Unteachers – *A Human Comedy*** – This album will make your jaw drop. A serious consideration for album of the year. They pick up where Tantrum of the Muse left off and go way beyond!

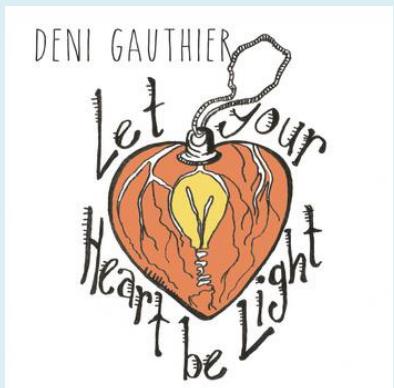
**White Lighter – *White Lighter*** – Another contender for album of the year. Mark Saloman and Steve Dail will kick your teeth in, and you will like it.

**Woven Hand – *Refractory Obdurate*** – Woven Hand just can't be stopped. They never disappoint. But they will scare you a bit.

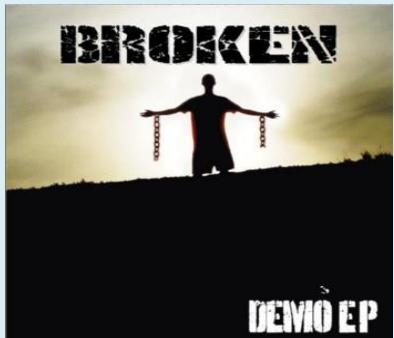
**Writ on Water – *The Greystest Day*** – They finally recorded their sophomore album, but the result shows they still have it.



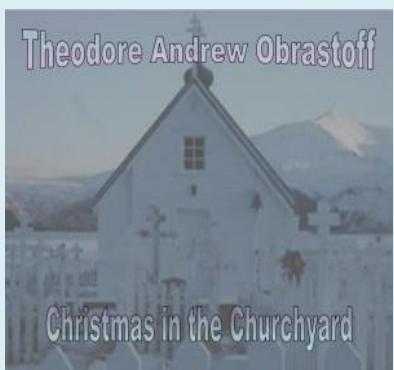
**Stranger Kings** | *Stranger Kings* | 2014 Subdivision Records | [store.northernrecords.com](http://store.northernrecords.com) | Every so often I hear a band and make such a strong connection to the music that it becomes hard to even convey through words. Stranger Kings is one of those bands. It is a band that must be experienced by listening and it is an album that makes a connection in your soul. Fans of The Lassie Foundation will be pleased to hear Eric Campuzano (guitar) in action again, with a compelling band that also includes Herb Grimaud (bass), Holly Nelson (vocals) and Brady Esquivel (drums). | The Stranger Kings have completed a full length release of dynamic sounds and an aura that embodies the framework of what I would categorize as new wave or neo-psychadelia music. There is such a diverse element to each of the nine songs on their first full length release, and it elegantly spans musical genres and defies attempts to characterize or classify. When I first listened to this album I was really taken by the immense beauty of the music itself; there are elements of ambient, shoegaze, new wave and a healthy feeling of 80's alternative/pop music completed by seamless layers and a monumental nod to the poetic beauty that lies in a very inwardly focused and contemplative perspective. It's a unique record that carries the listener and creates a sincere appreciation for beauty that's delivered in a very fluid and dreamy way. | The lyrics and the music are infused so perfectly that both compliment and protect each other in an exceptionally precise manner. This album is both pensive and joyous, thought provoking and analytical in beauty. The lyrics are poetic and the vocals are delivered in such a way that they ride the music and then crash and break against the backdrop of the experienced sound that has been created. This is a defining first release for a band, Stranger Kings have created a sonic drug, a stimulant for the mind and the emotions. This is music that creates a vibe, it paints a picture and carries you on a journey that is emotional and ever changing, and it carries you to a place strangely familiar, but equally treads new ground. (Steve Ruff)



**Deni Gauthier** | *Let Your Heart Be Light* | 2014 | [denigauthier.bandcamp.com](http://denigauthier.bandcamp.com) | Deni Gauthier brings us an ep of stripped back Christmas classics, just in time for the holidays. This collection showcases some of Deni's favorite Christmas tunes, most of which you are probably familiar with. The first track is probably the least known of the collection, Hawksley Workman's "A House Or Maybe A Boat." Even though I wasn't familiar with this tune, it sets the tone perfectly for the rest of the ep. "Merry Little Christmas" has a nice romping rhythm section that will get your toes tapping – probably my favorite song in this collection. The rest of the ep is a bit slower and at times more somber, closing up with "Christmas Time Is Here." I could see myself snuggling up next to the fire and enjoying these songs with a hot beverage. Even though the songs are "stripped back", they don't sound stale (like so many generic folk/acoustic Christmas albums out there do). Deni puts a good bit of care and time into each cover that comes through in the recording. I recommend checking this one out before the new year is here. I've heard that Santa will automatically put you on his "nice" list if you do. (Matt Crosslin)



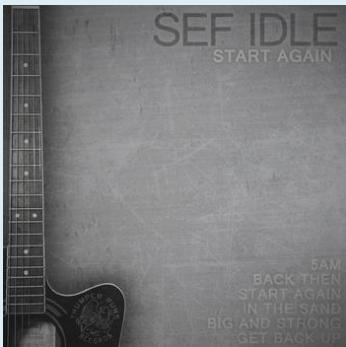
**Broken** | EP | 2014 Thumper Punk Records | [thumperpunkrecords.bandcamp.com](http://thumperpunkrecords.bandcamp.com) | This three song EP is barely over six minutes long. Broken serves up another release of old school hardcore, sounding a bit more on the faster side of Revivalist. The energy and passion are also present on this release. Several labels seem to know how to find these old school hardcore bands that still have the energy to keep your attention. You can grab this for name your own price at the Thumper Punk BandCamp page. (Matt Crosslin)



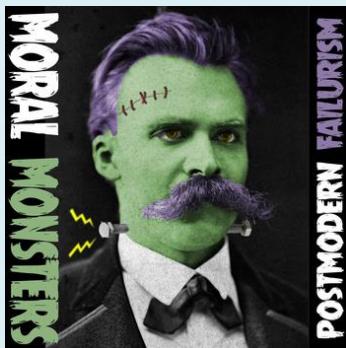
**Theo Obrastoff** | *Christmas In The Churchyard* | 2014 | [www.andysangelsrecords.org](http://www.andysangelsrecords.org) | Theo Obrastoff returns with a Christmas album that is a bit different from Christmas albums you are used to hearing. Have you ever wondered what would happen if you mixed a traditional orchestral or jazz Christmas album with a more rock-oriented modern Christmas album? If so, then look no further. The result of a mixture like that would sound just like Christmas in the Churchyard. Starting off with an orchestra number, Theo then transitions into a spoken word welcome, then a piano rock number, then a jazz-influenced number, then an almost alt-rock number... continuing on with a mix of various styles covering classics and originals. Christmas in the Churchyard covers a good mix of styles that is held together by the fact that it never gets too heavy or out there. You don't get too much jazz or too many new numbers or too many covers or too many orchestral numbers. Just a good balanced mix of all. There are also several guest appearances, including one from Mr. Mike Indest. Overall, a great album that will make a welcome addition to anyone's Christmas music collection. (Matt Crosslin)



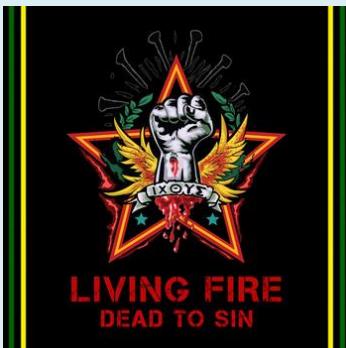
**Revivalist | *Bother* | 2014 On The Attack Records | [ontheattackrecords.storenvy.com](http://ontheattackrecords.storenvy.com)** | A short ep of old school hardcore mixed with modern energy and passion. From what I remember, the first wave of spirit-filled hardcore started off strong but became tired sounding fast. If the original bands of that movement had been able to keep the level of energy that Revivalist does on this ep, the whole scene would have kept my interest longer. I hear occasional touches of various modern cores on this ep, but for the most part this is fast, loud, and “screamed-like-they-mean-it” (but not screamo). You can download for free at HM Magazine or purchase a hard copy at the link below. (Matt Crosslin)



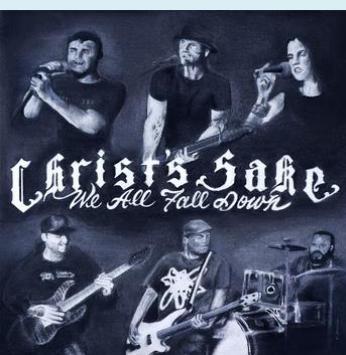
**Sef Idle | *Start Again* | 2014 Thumper Punk Records | [thumperpunkrecords.bandcamp.com](http://thumperpunkrecords.bandcamp.com)** | Don't let the Thumper Punk label fool you – it's not always about punk. This EP is a foray into singer-songwriter territory. Well, it is by a punk rocker, so I guess it's close to punk – somewhat. But pretty much all you have here is Sef and his guitar (usually acoustic). Harsher punk vocals over acoustic music might sound like a bad idea to some, but here it works. Not for everyone, but if the combination sounds interesting to you, give it a shot. A short ep of six acoustic songs that will still fit into your punk rock collection no problem. (Matt Crosslin)



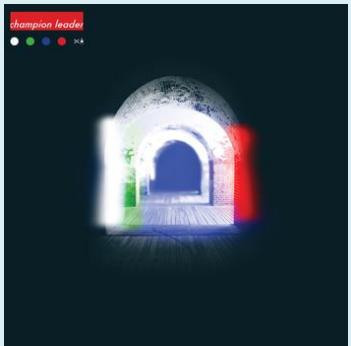
**Moral Monsters | *Postmodern Failurism* | 2014 Veritas Vinyl | [veritasvinyl.bandcamp.com](http://veritasvinyl.bandcamp.com)** | Moral Monsters plays old school punk rock that is musically satisfying. The problem with this short ep is the lyrics. As you can tell by the name, this ep deals with post modernism and other problems in the church. Or at least, they try to. Unfortunately, the band's complete misunderstanding of the topics they cover really distracts from the points they are trying to make. Post modernism has its problems, but Moral Monsters really doesn't touch on them. Instead, it's like they took an extreme right wing misunderstanding of everything from philosophy to the American Church to progressivism and addressed those misunderstandings as reality. Straw men are easy to tear down, after all. This is really just par for the course with so many churches – not taking the time to understand those they oppose and then tearing down a caricature rather than truly addressing anything meaningfully. The thing is, I could easily give you a dozen real problems with any topic they address. So it's not like I am opposing their religious beliefs – I just wish they took the time to understand what they are attacking. (Matt Crosslin)



**Living Fire | *Dead To Sin* | 2014 Thumper Punk Records | [thumperpunkrecords.bandcamp.com](http://thumperpunkrecords.bandcamp.com)** | This album marks the second turn of street punk/Oi! rockers Living Fire. They had it on their first album, and they still have it here. Energy, speed, and sweat in abundance. For the uninitiated or the non-punk fans, all Thumper Punk releases might sound the same. But for those of us that love the spectrum of punk in all its simplicity and diversification, this is one corner that is rarely covered with this much passion any more. I don't think Living Fire ever slows down for the entire album. Just one track of furious street punk after another. Thirteen studio tracks and three live bonus tracks at the end that won't disappoint fans of this corner of the punk world. (Matt Crosslin)



**Christ's Sake | *We All Fall Down* | 2014 Thumper Punk Records | [thumperpunkrecords.bandcamp.com](http://thumperpunkrecords.bandcamp.com)** | This one fell through the cracks, and I am not sure why. I definitely enjoyed this one a bit more than the other Thumper Punk releases (which are all generally good quality to begin with). Christ's Sake has a faster punk style with higher pitch vocals than usual – the label described them as Orange County punk. My ears hear them mixing a bit of melodic rock and alternative into the mix with some vocal styles that you usually don't run into with punk music. Nice to hear something a bit different in the punk world – I guess you could best describe it as a bit of a pop leaning sound without treading into “pop punk” territory. The band even slows down for the occasional ballad – if that word can exist in the punk world. Being a big fan of skate punk, my favorite track would be the short “Let's Skate” naturally – a song that finds the band showing off their skate punk chops nicely. (Matt Crosslin)



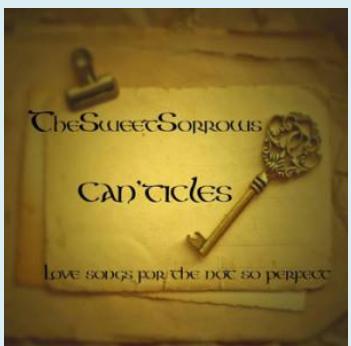
**Champion Leader | 4st | 2014 | [championleader.bandcamp.com](http://championleader.bandcamp.com)** | Champion Leader is back with another batch of 80's inspired new-wavy gothic alterna-rock goodness. Few people out there can dial in that modern 80s sound like J. Bozeman and company. The only problem here is that this ep is just too short. Maybe Bozeman has to spend time with other projects, like the new Luxury album. Maybe they felt like the four songs here were enough. Maybe they really wanted to call the ep 4st and had to stop. But that minor gripe aside, even if you aren't a fan of the 80s, the modern production and solid songwriting should be enough to pull you in as well. So far, my favorite song of the batch is the groovin' thump of "Fun!" Or maybe the goth rock goodness of opening track "The Souls of the Nude." You can check this out on BandCamp for pay-what-you like. (Matt Crosslin)



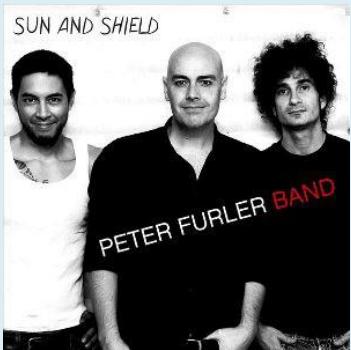
**Writ on Water | *The Greyst Day* | 2014 | [writonwater.com](http://writonwater.com)** | We all know the stories of bands that disappeared after an album or two back in the 80s or 90s – stories that usually include rumors of unreleased albums. Every once and a while, one of those bands will come back and make new music. Even more rare are those that can dig up the old recordings and release them. Then there is the unique case of Writ on Water, who have had the rare opportunity to not only come back decades years later and release new music, but go back and record a follow-up album that never quite happened. Most fans of Writ on Water were aware of the plans to record *The Greyst Day* back in the 90s, and most of us were happy to have the demos of that album (which were released several years ago). However, this new album of fully recorded songs more than proves why Writ on Water needed to record them. While the demos were good, these new recordings go far beyond in quality and depth. You get 12 re-recorded songs and two never released songs (leaving one demo unique to the older CD). The music goes through several different moods, from the pounding and swirling "Points on a Line" to the almost techno/dubiously moody "Wicker" to the gothic alt rock of "Withdrawn" to the darkly ambient "Degeneration." However, this is still Writ on Water, and fans of Sylph and A Wingless King will feel right at home with this album. If there were musical justice in the world, a decent label would pick this up and put it out on vinyl. I know everyone is jumping on the vinyl bandwagon, but this is music that truly fits that format. For now, enjoy it digitally from most digital services. (Matt Crosslin)



**Nate Allen & The Pac-Away Dots | *Take Out The Trash* | 2014 | [destroynateallen.com](http://destroynateallen.com)** | So the story goes that Nate Allen (of Destroy Nate Allen fame) was in a bit of a rough spot: "Nate Allen found himself fresh off a long tour, unemployed, in his early 30's, married and living in his parent's spare bedroom. Everyone's dream . . ." If you are like me and the mixture of sarcasm and angst of that statement grabs your attention, then you might also want to give *Take Out The Trash* a listen. Just imagine someone in that situation also wrestling with some difficult issues in life, like being blind to some forms of racism. But say that person already has a knack for writing fun folk punk songs with their wife in a popular duo. So now said person has to find a way to record these songs. What do they do? Add a full band and rock out. So that said person... well, Nate Allen, you know who I am talking about... goes to Kickstarter to fund the rest of the process and BOOM! we have ourselves a great album. So... the real question is: does this just sound like Destroy Nate Allen with guitars added? Not really. Yes, there is Nate and his vocals and songwriting in common, but the basic idea is different. I'm not sure how to pin it down to describe it, but this sounds like a full band and half of a folk punk duo smashed together into something familiar to the duo but also something entirely its own. Which is a good thing in my book. Not to mention a few surprises thrown in, like the banjo and kazoo-infused folk rollick of "Hunger Pain." There are so many great phrases on this album I hardly know where to start, but I loved this one from "West Side Blues": "Context clues and social views, gun fightin' on the evening news, preachin' at me until I finally see the light." I had planned to support this album anyways, but one listen to it and I immediately went over to the Kickstarter page to grab the vinyl. I would recommend you do the same. No, really – you should. If they hit the next stretch goal there will be a video game. That's how cool they are. (Matt Crosslin)



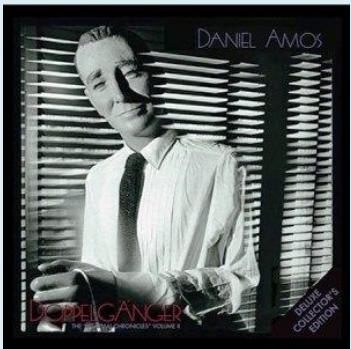
**The Sweet Sorrows | *Can'ticles, Love Songs For The Not So Perfect* | 2014 | [sammyhorner.bandcamp.com](http://sammyhorner.bandcamp.com)** | Sammy Horner and his lovely bride Kylie are back with their signature sound of Outlaw Country/Celtic/Americana/Folk/Rock. This album lives up to the title in every way, shape, and form. Coming in like a modern underground Johnny and June the opening track "Ain't Got Nothin' On Me" is a brilliant duet that most folks in love can relate to. "You Got Mine" pulls in some cool sitar work and has a Summer Of Love Psychedelic Pop feel to it... with Celt overtones, hard to describe, such a great song!. "There Is No Word For This (Noah's Song)" is simply epic! Sammy always knows how to work in a maze of emotions in his lyrics on all his releases, you'll laugh, you'll cry, and a few things in between maybe. So light a candle and cuddle up with your partner and enjoy, it's for you! If you liked their last release *It All Belongs* I guarantee you'll dig this one! Give this group and Sammy's solo stuff your full support! You can't go wrong! (Joshua Lory)



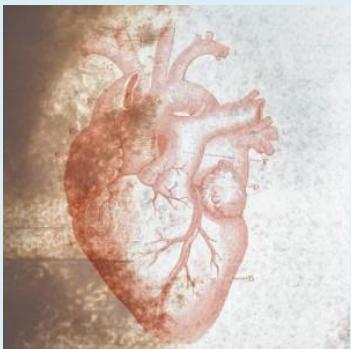
**Peter Furler Band | *Sun and Shield* | 2014 Platinum Pop | [peterfurler.com](http://peterfurler.com)** | I will be totally honest when I say I had no idea who Peter Furler was, never heard or checked out his former band the Newsboys, never wanted to, just didn't seem like my thing, same with DC Talk and Audio A, I've always, for the most part, been and stayed underground. I wanted to check this out because of Furler's association with Steve Taylor's new project and the songs I've heard from that are amazing! This album, start to finish it rocks! The first half of the album is filled with high energy Alt/Pop Rock hooks, sing along choruses, thoughtful spiritual lyrics, I really like the production, it's not over produced by any means and that's a good thing. Really like the structure of "So High", "the tune "Shame" might be my favorite on the album. "Yeshua" brings down the lights a little in the middle of this 10 song 34 minute set, a well done praise and worship song and continues a reflective mood throughout the rest of the second half of the LP closing out with another hymn called "We Won't Forget". Still not sure if his other releases are my thing, but the guy can write a good song and that's what it's all about, why give the Creator anything less than your best! I highly recommend Sun and Shield! And I can't wait for that Perfect Foil album! (Joshua Lory)



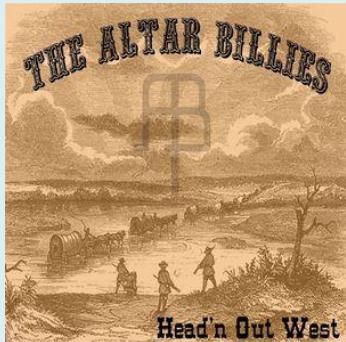
**The Choir | *Shadow Weaver* | 2014 | [thechoir.net](http://thechoir.net)** | For me as a fan, The Choir has really hit a great stride starting at O How The Mighty Have Fallen and continuing on over the next few albums and on to this recent release. I'm a bigger fan than ever of the music. Shadow Weaver has a darker musical vibe akin to Chase The Kangaroo. I've compared it to the Cure's Disintegration a few times over in my head, even played them back to back and they're a nice fit. Big spacey sound scapes abound, deep poetic lyrics, tribal rhythms, and bass lines all over the octave spectrum, brilliant as ever! I like this album start to finish and believe it should be listened to in that fashion: sit down and take the time to soak it in. Each track stands on its own and ushers you into the next, I have no favorites. I still miss the days when these guys lived in SoCal and played the San Francisco area a lot. I lost count how many times I saw them between Circle Slide and Kissers and Killers, hope to see them live again someday. I highly recommend this album! (Joshua Lory)



**Daniel Amos | *Doppelganger (deluxe collector's edition)* | 2014 Stunt Records | [danielamos.com](http://danielamos.com)** | Daniel Amos has put out some really quality re-releases the last few years, add this one to the list of must haves! This band has always been one of the most difficult to categorize because their music is always so unique on each release, so varied and so far ahead of their contemporaries not only in sound, but lyrically Tarry Taylor is in a class by himself. My introduction to Daniel Amos came in 1986 with Fearful Symmetry, but upon discovering this I also immediately picked up Vox Humana and Doppelganger. There is something so unique with this band that seems to really start to shine with the Doppelganger release. This album originally came out in 1983, and it was not only way ahead of its time, but it musically tilled a new ground not heard in many music circles, but especially not in Christian music circles. It sounds like new wave music floating on a magic carpet, transporting you to a time and place that you've never experienced before. The entire album is a journey in a world that both delights and amazes, it puts you on edge with anticipation, and the delivery and arrangements of the songs are so well done that this album literally becomes an experience. | Doppelganger is the album that I feel began DA's journey into becoming what I considered to be a truly alternative band. For a group to have right around 40 years together is staggering, for my tastes Doppelganger is where I felt they really began to shine with a unique sound that they have carried to this day. My favorite thing about this reissue (and there is a lot of stuff here) is the clarity of the music. I recommend listening with headphones to really grasp how clear and distinct the sound is. There are so many samples on this album and various sounds that can really be heard clearly and it adds to the overall experience, I honestly felt like I was hearing this album for the first time. In addition, the second disc of alternate takes, rough mixes and live cuts that have never been released before add an entirely new dimension to the package. Hearing the second disc is like experiencing the album completely differently, and both discs sound better than ever. Check out the links below to purchase the album and read more about it, I'll also paste in the band's review of what this 2 disc package includes. Doppelganger is a testament to the talent these guys possess, it was an excellent choice for a reissue that is so top notch it paints the album in a new light. Here's hoping that one day Fearful Symmetry will get a re-issue of this quality. (Steve Ruff)



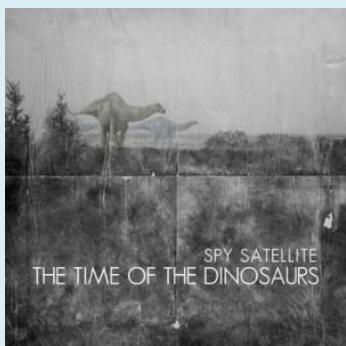
**The Old-Timers | *Be Reconciled* | 2014 Thumper Punk Records | [thumperpunkrecords.bandcamp.com](http://thumperpunkrecords.bandcamp.com)** | Fast, blistering punk rock with random spoken word pieces. The Old-Timers show that they can bring the punk and the variety. "The Joy of Reconciliation" even starts off with an a capella intro before slamming into some in-your-face punk. Six songs (two of which are spoken word) make for a quick listen. But I like how they are doing their own thing as well as sticking to their punk foundation at the same time. (Matt Crosslin)



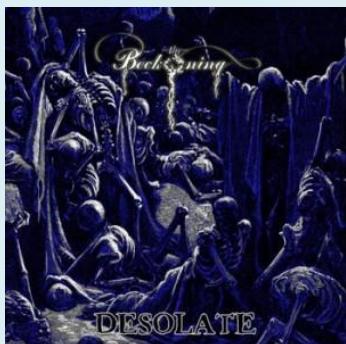
**The Altar Billies** | *Head'n Out West* | 2014 | [facebook.com/altarbillies](http://facebook.com/altarbillies) | I know that pretty much every review of this album is going to start off with "Yee-haw!"... but you just can't help shouting that after listening to the latest offering from The Altar Billies. Well, "yee-haw Amen!" is more like it – Mike Stand has never shied away from the impactful spiritual lyrics that have been his staple since The Altar Boys. Stand along with Chuck Cummings and Johnny X really poured their heart and soul into this album and it shows. There are fewer Altar Boys covers this time 'round, but the ones that are there work well. I know some people feel Rockabilly is a one trick pony genre, but *Head'n Out West* will proves them wrong. There are 15 songs that never get old or repetitive. Just a tad bit of the Altar Boys punk side shows through here and there, too. I highly recommend this album to fans of any good music in the rock to punk spectrum – you won't be disappointed. (Matt Crosslin)



**Bill Mallonee & the Darkling Planes** | *Winnowing* | 2014 | [billmalloneemusic.bandcamp.com](http://billmalloneemusic.bandcamp.com) | I've been a big fan of Bill Mallonee's music ever since *Vigilantes of Love* put out *Killing Floor*. I can't remember exactly what song the college radio station played, it was either "Motel Room" or "Anybody's Guess," but I was hooked. I immediately picked up his previous releases and have been a fan ever since. It's a rather remarkable thing I discovered recently on my birthday, I was 18 in 1992 when I discovered Mallonee, that means I've been listening for 22 years... for over half of my life I have found great comfort in his music and it has been a staple through many years and experiences. | His latest, *Winnowing*, is affecting in every sense. Mallonee's ability to write through the eyes of the "everyday man" is so perfected and honest, and that makes it relatable and why I think it leaves such an impression. The songwriters gaze is a commentary, sometimes it's focus is social and other times it focus is naked and introspective, but it is all about the journey that we all toil under. The heartache and the heartbreak, the struggle with being human, and yet he confesses these stories with a sense of redemption and the encouragement to embrace the experience of life. | *Winnowing* is a defining album in Mallonee's 60+ catalogue. This is the real deal, the music sounds astonishing, and you can hear the dusty, road worn miles in Mallonee's voice. For a singer/songwriter to release such a staggering amount of work that is so intuitive is a quite an accomplishment, and it is a pace that I have never seen anyone else establish. | I honestly feel that this is Bill's best work to date, and it is a fitting thing that this will be his first release on vinyl. You can still get pre-orders, digital files and CD's of not just *Winnowing*, but his catalogue of 60 or so records can be found at [www.billmallonee.net](http://www.billmallonee.net) There is a link there to his bandcamp page, which right now he is offering a "buy one get one" for his entire discography. There is an entire world of music to discover for people who like great Americana music, if you like storytellers and enjoy the experience of music that evokes deep sentiment, check Bill Mallonee out. This latest offering *Winnowing* is an absolute must, it is Mallonee at his best. (Steve Ruff)



**Spy Satellite** | *The Time of the Dinosaurs* | 2014 | [spysatellite.bandcamp.com](http://spysatellite.bandcamp.com) | Seems like the best of the 80s and 90s alternative music scenes have been making a comeback recently. But not in a cheesy, nostalgic way. Spy Satellite is a prime example of this. Josh Lory and I were discussing how we heard influences of everything from 4AD bands to Violet Burning. Songs like "Horse Equals Horse" are pretty aggressive, while tunes like "A Whisper in Madness" build a nice almost gothic atmosphere. Their Michael Knott tribute cover also makes an appearance on this album and fits right in. The last song "Signals" is probably one of my favorites in the set – the underlying groove is weird and cool at the same time. Their official BandCamp bio blurb says they stay mostly in the "nu-gaze, post-rock" genre, and that is an accurate description I would say. You can check them out on BandCamp and download for the price you choose. (Matt Crosslin)



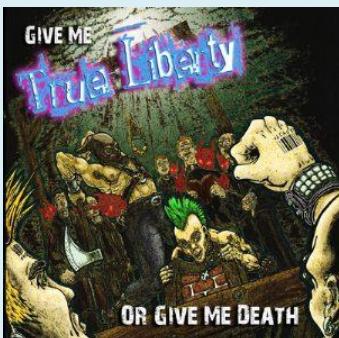
**The Beckoning** | *Desolate* | 2014 | [thebeckoningcanada.bandcamp.com](http://thebeckoningcanada.bandcamp.com) | The Beckoning return with a two song demo that is longer than some eps. While there are only two songs here, both clock in at over nine minutes. They also change tempos and signatures frequently, so don't expect to be bored. And I say that as someone that tends to get bored with the repetitiveness of some extreme music. This is aggressive extreme progressive gothic metal. Growled vocals combined with operatic female vocals, technical thrash metal, spoken word, 70s progrock, and several other influences that form – for lack of better words – an extreme metal symphony movement in each song. But it works, just like on their past demo. These songs are available for free on their BandCamp page, so check them out. Here's hoping they still plan to put together a full length soon – technically they only need three more songs to make it happen. (Matt Crosslin)



**U2 | Songs of Innocence | 2014 Island Records | u2.com** | I will admit – I was that weird kid that loved Art History class. The hidden messages and critiques so prevalent in great art (and poetry and prose) fascinated me. Some artists would get paid well to create art by people with political views they disagreed with, and then would mock the people that paid them in the art that they paid for. Brilliant. | William Blake was a unique person by all counts, but especially in the sense that he mixed poetry and artwork. A true early pioneer in multimedia art. Even more interesting were his politics, especially his disillusionment with the French and American revolutions and his beliefs that they had “simply replaced monarchy with irresponsible mercantilism.” In other words, France and America wanted to be huge at any costs, and how is that different from monarchy? | So what does this have to do with the new U2 album? They were paid a huge sum of money to give their album away for free as a massive PR stunt and then named the album after the most famous poem of a poet that decried irresponsible mercantilism (something that Apple is constantly accused of). They got paid well to create art by a company that has been accused of killing good music and then mocked the company that paid them in the art that they paid for. Brilliant. | And don’t think for a second that Bono is too dense to not know all of this. Love him or hate him, the dude knows his political commentary and how to work in subtle jabs to those in power while still shaking hands with them and taking their money. | But none of that should matter to the music fan. Music should stand or fall on its own regardless of political or corporate influences. I’m frankly embarrassed that so many reviewers are letting these issue influence their enjoyment or hatred of this album. | Because *Songs of Innocence* is not an album for everyone. I connected with it instantly and repeated listens have reinforced my love for it. There is an urgency, a passion, a drive that was missing a bit from *No Line on the Horizon*. Sure there, was some of that on NLoH, but it was marred by songs like “Get on Your Boots” that found the band trying too hard to not make another “Vertigo” out of a song that was obviously meant to be another “Vertigo.” That lack of confidence in their song kicked the legs out of a song that should have been the tent pole for the rest of the album. | I initially loved *No Line on the Horizon* and then started to fall out of love after a few listens. I still really like much of it, but see the holes and issues with it. *Songs of Innocence* only grows more interesting with each listen. U2 decided to go back to their roots for inspiration and it shows. This is not U2 being sadly inspired by bands that they inspired back in the day. This is U2 going back to their roots and being inspired by the same things that more modern bands are also inspired by. In other words, if you hear a sad attempt to sound like The Killers sounding like U2, you are not listening close enough to differentiate between what the real inspirations are for both bands. Which no one is requiring you to if you are a fan – I just wish people paid to write reviews at least knew how to make those differentiation. But I guess Bill Mallonee is right and true rock journalism is dead. | *Songs of Innocence* won’t connect with everyone, and that is okay with me. But at least let it connect or not connect with you because of how it was performed and not how it was distributed. Don’t love it or hate it just because it was free. (Matt Crosslin)



**Swimsuit Grandma | Barely There | 2014 | mikeindest.bandcamp.com** | Mike Indest returns with one of his strongest offerings to date. Mike may speak of dry spells and all that, but these songs really don’t sound like a songwriter coming off a period of writer’s block. Barely There has a flow to it that sounds like it just came together easily and naturally. Or to borrow some terms from Sean Severson of And How – airy and cohesive. The rest of the band (Eddie Parrino, Monty LeBlanc, and Glen Sigur) add a bit of rock and swagger to the mix. I’m also diggin’ the reggae touches to some of the songs. Despite the band name, the subject matter is lament, and therefore you get a bit more of a somber tone than past offerings. Or more accurately, each song is based on a chapter from the book of Lamentations. As with past offerings, this ep is free to download from BandCamp – s what do you have to lose? (Matt Crosslin)



**True Liberty | Give Me True Liberty or Give Me Death | 2014 Thumper Punk | thumperpunkrecords.storenvy.com** | Live greatest hits plus three new songs from Christian punks True Liberty. I had no idea they have five albums already. Someone on Facebook asked if there would ever be a revival of the Christian Punk scene, and then was mad to find out no one had told him about Thumper Punk. But even I didn’t know some of these bands have been around this long. This album proves that True Liberty is the real deal, since they can obviously crank it live. I have sometimes wondered how many of the Thumper Punk bands are live bands and how many are garage bands or “studio projects” (which is not necessarily a bad thing, just wondering). Well, now I know for at least one. The live recording quality is pretty good, and the new songs are the same good quality of their last full length. So, if you are like me and not up to date on all True Liberty releases, this album will serve as the Cliff Notes version. (Matt Crosslin)



**Prodigal | 30th Anniversary Limited Edition 3 CD Set | 2014 | prodigalnow.com** | Prodigal was a top-notch 80's band that should have been huge. They were known for innovative music videos, quality song writing and production, and embedding computer code on vinyl. Yes – you read that right. That was how far ahead of the game they were. This box set is the first CD issue of their three classic albums – Prodigal, Electric Eye, and Just Like Real Life. Each album gets an individual disc, all packaged in one of those double thick old school CD box set cases. The songs sound like they have been given a pristine digital transfer and re-master. Also a nice retrospective essay by DW Dunphy. Unfortunately, that embedded computer code didn't seem to make it (but I can't even find it on my own vinyl, so I don't know if it will ever see the light of day again). At some point, I hope they put out a DVD of their videos, but if not they can easily be found on YouTube. As for the music itself, while this is still 80's stadium rock/new wave, the quality is so good that everything stands the test of time. The first S/T is slightly more mainstream rock, Electric Eye is the most alternative/progressive album, and Just Like Real Life is (of course) the most mature. Unfortunately, band leader Loyd Boldman passed away before this Set was released, but it does serve as a fitting tribute for a musical genius. Get it now before it is gone. (Matt Crosslin)



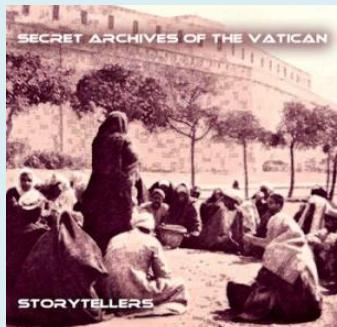
**Cursed Breath / Innocent Blood | 2014 Veritas Vinyl | veritasvinyl.storenvy.com** | A split 12 inch from two bands that have been floating around the Veritas Vinyl universe for a few years. I know split 7-inches and eps are everywhere, but it's been a while since I have listened to a split full length. Both Slaves BC and Grace & Thieves occupy the heavier end of the music spectrum. Grace & Thieves start the split off by offering up three intense songs of hardcore with a bit of punk attitude, thrash intensity, and doom soloing. Wait, what? Victor Griffin makes a guest appearance on one song that adds a nice change of pace. Slaves BC is the second half, laying down four songs with even more intense screaming vocals and faster beats. For fans of intense hardcore, this split offers you a good taste of two bands you will want to check out. (Matt Crosslin)



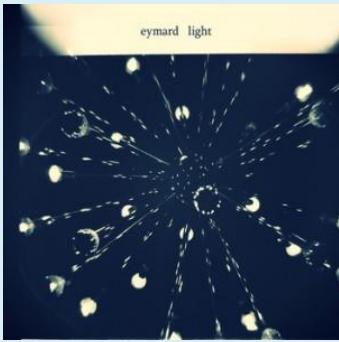
**Gov't Hate Mail | Gov't Hate Mail | 2014 Veritas Vinyl | veritasvinyl.storenvy.com** | So... yeah. What sound is this? Punk-ish hardcore-leaning "Northwestern 90s music scene" rock. It's not that Gov't Hate Mail is trying to do the "so weird I don't know what this is" sound... or the "change style every song" sound... or even the "change styles every minute" sound. They just dialed into a sound that mixes a lot of different styles and then crank that sound for every song. For those that don't know, GHM is comprised of two guys who were in bands like Crux, Empty Tomb, and The Clergy and one offspring from each. Sure, the first song starts off almost a bit mellow, but it picks up and picks up until it is pretty much kicking your teeth in. In fact, the whole disc is pretty intense – I highly recommend this for fans of any of the bands that gave birth to this new incarnation, or good punk/intense/alternative/rock music. (Matt Crosslin)



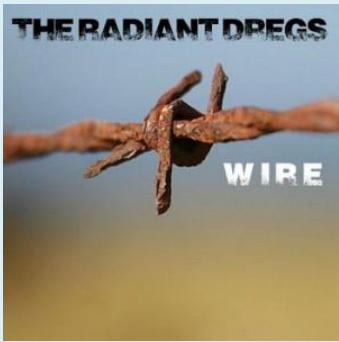
**Basement Tapes | 2014 Down the Line Collective | downthelinecollective.bandcamp.com** | Not sure how to review this entire compilation without hitting each song individually. Which I don't know if I have time for, since there are so many! I'm not sure why I expected more singer-songwriter songs, but there are some nice rock, alternative, punk, and electronic songs in the mix. Mike Indest did a killer job of pulling this group of songs together, and getting a cool Michael Knott painting for the cover to boot! So, you have Human 2.7 (dark electronica), Theo Obrastoff (rock with a bit of groove), Jon Jordan (one acoustic and one hard rocking), Jim Wiita (quirky acoustic), Eddie Parrino (soulful acoustic rock), And How (unique acoustic rock), Straighteners & Fasteners (experimental lo-fi). Jeff Elbel of Ping (cool cover of The Choir's "Blue Skies"), the b-attitudes (alternative rock (capital R!)), Western Grace featuring Jason Groff (fiery punk), John Piccari (driving alternative rock), The Radiant Dregs (lo-fi acoustica), Dw Dunphy (lush serenades), and Mike Indest (groovy surf rock). Every song is killer. And it is all free! Check it out on the collective BandCamp site and give it a download. This is the new underground! (Matt Crosslin)



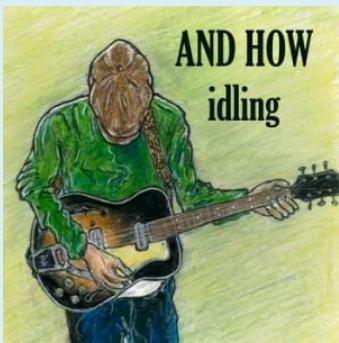
**Secret Archives of the Vatican | Storytellers | 2014 | secretarchivesofthevatican.bandcamp.com** | Electronic world music outfit Secret Archives of Vatican returns with another new release of sonic goodness for the masses. I can't count the number of albums they have put out (mainly because there are so many, but also because I can't find an accurate discography anywhere) – but they never seem to slack off or have a bad year. Storytellers pretty much provides all of the surprises and textures you have come to love from SAotV. For those not familiar with their sounds, think electronic music built on various cultural rhythms and structures utilizing real instruments and electronic ones seamlessly and that is a good start. Instrumental, groovy in places, introspective in others – you will always find something to dig into. Middle Eastern tones still dominate this album as the last, but you will find tones from Central Asia to Turkey to North Africa mixed in with a few other various influences (some that even touch on Baroque). Available as a pay what you like album on BandCamp. (Matt Crosslin)



**Eymard | Light | 2014 Hill Deg Maria Records | [eymard.bandcamp.com](http://eymard.bandcamp.com)** | If you're reading this then hopefully you know who Rick McDonough is. If you don't, this is a good place to start. Rick is a musician, a photographer, a family man and a genuine purveyor of electronic wizardry. This eymard project of Rick's is just one of many outlets...he's one half of the duo that is Struck Last May with Michael Knott, his indie band is Hidden From Blackout, he plays in Paravell as well as contributing to While Rome is Burning, and I'm sure there is more that I just can't recollect right now. So, on to this impressive release... | Eymard first released Ambient Tracks for Film:One back in 2011. This is a much different release from the first album; the direction of that project was full of surprises and sonic enticing. This release, titled Light, seems a bit more playful and energetic. While it is full of layers and dimensions, the layers all coalesce to form a grand design that takes the listener in. There's a whimsical anticipation from the first track that builds through each and every song. When you fully engage this album it becomes very hypnotic and relaxing... almost as if anticipating the arrival of a newly discovered truth. At times it feels like the connection between dreams and ideas. I highly suspect that the birth of Rick's daughter played heavily into the recording of these songs, because there is the unhindered sense of wonder that echos through each track. There's a hope that reverberates with each listen. Each song plays a part in the story that culminates in the unique and joyous final track, where once again we hear Rick team up with Knott for a truly original song that can only be found when these two play together. | Do yourself a favor and get your hands on this release! While you're at it, scoop up the first eymard release as well. If you like ambient sound scapes you will enjoy both of these albums. You can fill your ears and support independent music that needs a voice. (Steve Ruff)



**The Radiant Dregs | Wire | 2014 | [theradiantdregs.bandcamp.com](http://theradiantdregs.bandcamp.com)** | The alternative anti-rock married super duo of The Radiant Dregs managed to take a break from releasing compilations of past material long enough to actually unleash some new tunes on us. I don't know what is in the DTL Collective water, but every act is getting better with each release. I don't want to sound like a broken record here, but if you haven't checked out the weirdness that is The Radiant Dregs, you need to ASAP. Their sound is pretty much just guitar, voices, and effects – so "anti-rock" is a good descriptor. They are different, unique, but still enjoyable. (Matt Crosslin)



**And How | Idling | 2014 | [andhow1.bandcamp.com](http://andhow1.bandcamp.com)** | So I am gearing up to write a review of last year's Inchworm when out of nowhere And How releases Idling. So I guess you get a two for one review here, even though the title says Idling. If you have been a fan of And How in the past, these new releases will only entrench your fandom. If you have not been a fan in the past, but are looking for new tunes in the same vein as many of the classic alternative bands we cover – And How is a great place to start. I don't know how he does it, but Sean Severson continues to grow and improve with each release while still sticking to the distinct And How sound. Seriously – check it out. (Matt Crosslin)



**Wovenhand | Refractory Obdurate | 2014 Death Wish, Inc. | [wovenhandmosaic.com](http://wovenhandmosaic.com)** | I have heard three albums lately that have blown me away completely. I did a review on one of them (CUSH SP3) here. The second album to level my senses is Wovenhand's new Refractory Obdurate. I've been a fan of David Eugene Edward's music for years and have enjoyed everything he's done. I didn't know what to expect from this album. DEE plays guitar as well in the newly re-formed Crime and the City Solution, so stylistically I was curious as to where it would land. Well, it landed in new territory that demands you listen. This album is David Eugene Edwards at his absolute best. | This is an album that beats you up with every listen, it digs in your mind at every turn. | Not since Nick Cave's Birthday Party has someone so violently captured the God of the Old Testament and begged for the salvation of the Christ through such desperate music and lyrics. There's something so intense about Edward's voice. His voice disarms you while the music drives it in without warning. It's like he spits in your face to take you off guard, and then punches your teeth into the back of your head. Without notice you bend over to spit out the broken teeth and the pooling blood, he kicks you in the gut with his boot and you crumple...what happens next is that you turn to look at him, you lock eyes and say "thank you." This album is a harrowing journey that beats the sh\*t out of me every time that I hear it. It causes me to reflect, to question and to feel the unmistakable punch to the face of exorcising inner demons. It's an album that demands attention at every turn. | This is post punk at it's absolute best, amped up and swinging on full speed. When DEE plays, you listen...when he sings and plays, you're put on notice. DEE's delivery comes like spears to the face, his message is unrepentant and his attack is without defense. This is the best Wovenhand by far...listen with caution...you've been warned. (Steve Ruff)



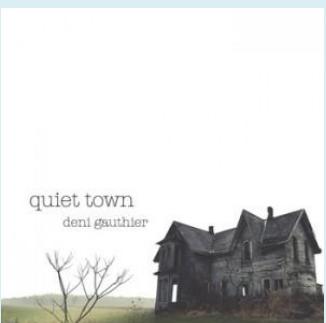
**Cush | SP3 | 2014 Northern Records | [cushkuxh.org](http://cushkuxh.org)** | The new SP3 record has been one that fans of the entity CUSH have been waiting on for a long time. I was super stoked to get this for a review, and almost asked to get it sooner than I did just because I had a hard time waiting to hear it knowing that it was completed. Fortunately, a little self-control and patience paid off...in spades! In what I hope honors this offering of songs, I'm going to discuss the music first, and then a little info on CUSH last. The music here is the goal, the art is the destination...the players, even as is important as they are, are mere details standing next to the manifestation of the music. | This release has really blown my mind for numerous reasons, and the format as well as the art/video that accompanies each song is a really impressive package of art. The music that comes from this band is always unique and challenging, challenging in a way that is a very reflective experience for me. It's an album that brings out the positive side of human nature and the emotions that coincide with that, as well as a very sombre and thoughtful dwelling on Christ that is deep and liberating at the same time. The music here creates a vehicle and relays the story through the ambience and the sounds of a very different style of Cush record than I've heard before. That alone adds to the aura and the mystery of Cush. | SP3 is truly the best album that Cush has ever delivered, and that's noticeable in the first song. I find this to be hands down the best release by whoever contributed on this record. Cush does not identify any specific players in the band, I have my lists of usual suspects that I hope are in here, but who knows. The music is absolutely the driving force here, and the talent on this record is of the calibre that I wish more people had access to hear it and spread the word. | It's hard to convey it through a review, this is one that must be experienced through listening (with headphones), and really absorbing the sounds that are communicated. This gem is available on vinyl too, with brilliant packaging to boot! Support this release with your purchase, your ears and mind will thank you. (Steve Ruff)



**ShiSho | *The Sisters EP* | 2013 | [shisho.bandcamp.com](http://shisho.bandcamp.com)** | ShiSho is a band that was a casualty of the death of MySpace (for my music collection, that is). I first tuned into their cool, crazy music when they covered Michael Knott's "Daddy's Whomp." Then I lost track because I failed to ever go back to MySpace to see what I was missing. But they popped up again on Facebook, and lo and behold they have new music! This is a great EP that showcases a huge leap forward in songwriting and style. These quirky sisters could fit in quite easily alongside any act on the Sounds Familyre label. They even get The Dead Milkmen to play on a tribute song to... The Dead Milkmen. A really impressive ep that hopefully is just a sign of what is to come. (Matt Crosslin)



**LIV. | *Be The Change* | 2013 On The Attack Records | [facebook.com/ontheattack/app\\_335383991105](https://facebook.com/ontheattack/app_335383991105)** | Hardcore is back! Or, more accurately, the hardcore most of us grew to love in the early 90s. LIV. Sounds like they could have been on a Helpless Among Friends compilation back in the day. I always felt that particular form of hardcore got swept under the rug too quickly by the new hardcore that came after it (as well as all the other cores), so it is good to hear bands bringing this sound back. But, I will say: LIV. Is not a Focused clone. They still have elements of modern hardcore in the mix.... but without the "getting tired of the whole hardcore scene but I still play it just because" thing that plagues some bands. You can tell these guys mean every word sung and every note played. They jump in, blaze through nine songs, and leave a bunch of sweat on the floor in the process. (Matt Crosslin)



**Deni Gauthier | *Quiet Town* | 2014 | [denigauthier.bandcamp.com](http://denigauthier.bandcamp.com)** | Alright, stick with me here. I don't want to scare people off, because this is a different album for Deni. But trust me, the difference is good. Quiet Town is more textured, deeper, richer, and more of a grower than Deni's previous albums. Not that his previous work wasn't deep – this just seems to go deeper. Quiet Town is one of those albums that strikes you as different on the first listen, but you're not sure about it. However, you are sure you are intrigued by it. So you go back to listen again. Which then leaves you feeling that you're still not sure what you think, but you can feel the music getting its hooks into you. So you listen again, and again, until finally you are telling yourself: "I wish this was on vinyl." Oh, but wait: it will be! "Into the West" starts off with a strong feeling of nostalgia and longing – I'm not even sure what is making that spaceship sound in the beginning, but it's pretty cool. "Silly Boy" is a bit of a fun, rambling song that dips into Americana territory. Then there is the cover of "In The Air Tonight" that adds an interesting sonic twist near the end before the album closes with the hopeful song "Gospel." A hopeful song with no real lyrics? Yeah, you have to hear it to know what I mean. For those that want a good, deep album to dig into with layers of sounds and lyrics, I can't recommend this one enough. (Matt Crosslin)



*Hand of the Maker* by Dan Zimmerman